THE INDIAN THEATRE

A Brief Survey of the Sanskrit Drama

BY

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Preface

The Indian Theatre forms a companion volume to the author's *Short History of Indian Literature* (London, 1907). Supplementary matter dealing with Veda and Vedânta will be published separately, and is to complete the whole.

The Short History has been well received by such eminent authorities as Drs. Deussen and Rhys-Davids. Other distinguished reviewers find fault with the lack of historical sequence. "Das Ganze ist nicht Geschichte, sondern eine gefällig arrangierte Reihe bunter Bilder", is Prof. Oldenberg's opinion. The author laid himself open to the criticism when he yielded to the publisher's wishes, and abandoned, though unwillingly, a more appropriate title. However, as long as the Short History conveys something of

the "spirit of Indian literature", love's labour is not lost.

The following pages, in like manner, endeavour to touch the very soul of the old Sanskrit plays. This could not always be done without sacrificing technical details, and making free with the original texts. The dramatic plot is often paraphrased and presented in a modern garb, in order to attract the modern mind.

I have to thank my learned friend, Dr. Louis C. Purser, Public Orator, Dublin University, for reading the proofs and offering valuable suggestions.

Contents

Pronunciation and Spelling

One syllable only is intoned in English words (intelligent), whereas in French and Sanskrit the accent is evenly distributed (intelligent—Himâlaya). The mark over â, î, û in Sanskrit words does not refer to the intonation at all, but indicates the length of the marked vowel in the following manner:—

Sanskrit.		English.	Example.
a	=	mamma [1]	karma
â	=	market	râja
i	=	fit	shiva
final i	=	any	kâli
î	=	feet	sîta
u	=	pull	buddha
final u	=	cuckoo	manu
û	=	pool	sûtra
e	=	day	veda
ai	=	die	adwaita
o	=	no	yoga
au	=	now	bauddha [2]
g	=	go (not gem)	gîta
y	=	yes (not lay)	himâlaya
th	=	ant-hill (not anthem)	atharva

[1] Intoning the first syllable as children do.

[2] i.e. Buddhist.

In order to simplify the spelling, all accents have been omitted over the final â and î. Thus Sîtâ and Kâlî are spelt Sîta and Kâli.[1] Nor have accents been provided for words sufficiently known in Europe, e.g. Âryan and brâhmin, Râjput and Kashmîr. Sikh, likewise derived from the Sanskrit, sounds like seek. An English pronunciation should be given to Punjab and Ganges, also to anglicized terms such as pundit (scholar) and suttee (burning of widows).[2]

There is a slight difference of sound between sh in the word nutshell and ch in kitchen. The latter is pitched a key higher, being uttered from the palate or roof of the mouth, while sh is formed in the hollowed tongue. Both sounds are represented in the Sanskrit alphabet, but since Kashmir, notwithstanding the palatal sibilant in the Indian script, is the accepted orthography in England, we have used sh in transcribing either sound. The reader will, therefore, find Shiva by the side of Vishnu, although the god of the Shivaists really bears a palatal initial, and the name of the rival deity an ordinary sh.

D, n, and t are linguals or tongue sounds in English, but dentals in Italian. The countrymen of Dante pronounce the poet's name by pressing the tip of their tongue against the teeth. Sanskrit has two letters for each of the three consonants, but the phonetic distinction is hardly noticeable to an Eng-

[1] Latin, too, sacrifices, for the sake of brevity, the vowel length shown in the final â and î of Indian feminines. Nova (new) is equal to Sanskrit navâ, and septima (7th) to saptamî.

[2] The Vedic priesthood energetically suppressed compulsory suttee, a remnant of primeval barbarism, but, like dying embers fanned into a flame, the hideous custom was subsequently re-established.

lishman. For this reason we transliterate Indian linguals (Vishnu) and dentals (Manu) alike.

Final **a** and **n** are occasionally omitted in the modern use of Greek and Latin names, Helen taking the place of Helena, Plato of Platon, and so on. We have followed the classical precedent with regard to several Sanskrit words.

Thus Arjun and Yudhishthir stand for Arjuna and Yudhishthira, **râja** (king) for râjan, **karma** (character) for karman. **Brahma** (God) and **âtma** (soul) are short for Brahman and âtman; brahmachâri (religious student), **sannyâsi** (saint), and **yogi** (devotee) for brahmachârin, sannyâsin, and yogin.

The Platonists of Alexandria looked upon Christ as an emanation of the Godhead, superior in degree, but equal in essence to the rest of mankind. This doctrine they called **gnosis**, or spiritual cognition, and themselves **gnostics**, i.e. **knowers** of the True. In order to call attention to the spiritual kinship which exists between Platonism and Vedânta, the spelling **gnâna** (self-knowledge) and **gnâni** (pursuing gnâna) has been adopted in preference to the customary jnâna and jnâni.[1]

[1] The above remarks on spelling and pronunciation, together with the footnote on p. 35, as well as the Appendix, are mostly copied, with the publisher's permission, from the author's *Short History of Indian Literature* (T. Fisher Unwin, London).

THE INDIAN THEATRE

1. In the Court Theatre of Ujain, 1400 years ago

A new play by Kâlidâsa is announced. The first performance is to take place at the Spring Festival, and will be the event of the Ujain season. The citizens are proud of their great poet, and declare with enthusiasm that, in beauty of language and truth of sentiment, no other Indian drama can vie with Shakuntala. It is King Vikrama's gracious pleasure that the play shall be acted at the Royal Castle. The excellent company, the author's high repute, the patronage of the Court, the gladdening springtime, and the elaborate scenic preparations happily combine in a

promise of great success. The splendid music-room of the castle, generally used for Court concerts and recitals, has been made ready for the performance of Shakuntala. The heavy folding-doors, now replaced by a brocaded stage curtain, lead to the central court where a large audience can be accommodated. A circular range of stately marble columns round which fresh garlands spirally ascend gives the open court a classical appearance. Sculptured busts of gods and kings rest, in the interjacent niches, on massive stands of blue porphyry, behind splashing cascades ornamented with quaint shellwork. The royal tent is pitched in the middle of the court. Its rich cloth is of Syrian scarlet, bordered with gold, and lined with pale-green cashmere. The six posts which support it are overlaid with beaten silver. Around their base, and in front of the stage, is a profusion of choice flowers and tropical foliage, tastefully arranged in the national colours of Ujain. The Imperial standard is waving from a flagstaff erected by the side of the theatre. The curtain folds are held together by a handsome ruby and diamond clasp,—the letters U

and V, initials of the city and the King, being daintily interlaced in the time-hallowed nâgari or urban script.[1] The clasp is to be presented to the poet, for the Râja knows how to honour literary merit.

At last the festive morning dawns. The orchestra plays behind the stage, and, amid the opening bars of the prelude, King Vikrama enters, regally adorned with diadem and purple, and surrounded by his aides-de-camp and high State functionaries. The vassal kings are seated on his right, the Queen and her ladies on the left of the throne. One lady-in-waiting holds a golden lyre and a wreath of immortelles and evergreen, the Queen's souvenir for the laureate. The crimson liveries and peach-coloured waistbands of the black slaves who serve refreshments are pleasantly relieved by the cool-looking lawn

[1] The early Christian communities that sprang up in towns referred to pagan rustics whose huts lay scattered over moor and "heath" as heathens. Gospel truth was slow to permeate the rural districts. Analogously, the Indian peasantry knew neither urbane literature nor the complex Sanskrit type, but town-bred (nâgara) gentlemen were familiar with the nâgari alphabet.—Sanskrit texts which are printed in Western countries dispense, more and more, with the awkward nâgari characters in favour of the simpler Latin script.

dresses, pearl necklaces, and diamond tiaras of the Court beauties. The palace court swarms with distinguished guests. Ministers and savants, brahmins and kshatriyas, the cream and flower of Ujain society, are promenading or lounging, chatting and laughing. Here are some excited politicians, eagerly discussing the impending war with some rebellious hill tribe in Nepal, and there is a group of fine gentlemen tattling over the latest society scandal or to-morrow's cock fight. In a quiet corner the ringing voice of Varâha-Mihir may be heard; the astronomer-royal is speaking to a calm-looking, white-bearded Persian. On the opposite side, the sparkling eyes and the broad forehead of Amara Singh are conspicuous. That famous Court lexicographer, who stoops slightly, is just handing the final portion of his Sanskrit Dictionary to a Buddhist friend, who has come all the way from the South of China to undertake the translation of the precious manuscript. But now the gay hum dies away into silence. An exquisite trio on flute, guitar, and harp is finished, and youthful choristers, pure-toned as silver bells, sing praise to the

gods, and greeting to King and clergy. Then the stage manager comes forward, pronounces a short benediction, and begs the illustrious audience in humorous verse to lend a kindly ear to the entertainment. The King's chamberlain unclasps the costly gem, and two figurantes draw aside the folds of the curtain. Admiring interjections and the clapping of hands testify that the beautiful woodland scene with which the play opens is highly appreciated. The gurgling of a swollen brook hurrying down the hillside and wild screams of waterfowl are heard in the distance. The golden rays of the morning sun fall through the branches of some fine old trees upon the noble features of King Dushyanta. Dressed in sombre russet, he alights from his hunting-car, bow in hand, and addresses his charioteer in eloquent Sanskrit verse. The background of the stage is raised, and represents a sacred grove with Kanva's peaceful hermitage. Two nut-brown maids in rustic garb are watering the thirsty plants in the tidy garden. The stage herald, holding a long staff of mimosa wood in his hand, so that he may conveniently point to the various objects

which he means to explain, now announces Shakuntala, the heroine of the play. A thrill of excitement runs through the spell-bound audience. Will the actress satisfy or disappoint their high expectations? But there she comes, clad in a plain frock of matted bass which veils and yet reveals her lovely form. The rounded lines of the girlish face, her large soft eyes and long downy lashes, the graceful neck and delicate arms, the heaving of her but ill-imprisoned bosom, the expressive attitudes and natural gestures, win every heart. She opens her lips, and her mouth speaks music. Vikrama's Court trembles with delight and deep emotion. Shakuntala, the latest play by Kâlidâsa, is henceforth enrolled among the immortal creations of the world's poetry.

2. The Origin of the Hindu Drama

In the beginning was the Veda, and divine races peopled the earth. The RIG VEDA is the oldest portion of Indian poetry, and the most ancient monument

of Aryan literature. The Rig hymns[1] extol the grandeur of nature and her forces, especially Indra the Thunderer, and Agni, god of fire celestial and terrestrial. The black-skinned aborigines of the Punjab were as ignorant of Vedic song and the polished Sanskrit in which it is embedded as the rude Anglo-Saxons were of the Chanson de Roland and the refined Norman tongue. But the churlish race that sprang from the enslaved Dasyus grew up in Aryan surroundings, and learned to speak Sanskrit. Still, they were excluded from the study of the Rig Veda, which remained a monopoly of the higher castes. The privileged classes alone received Vedic instruction, and, by virtue of that knowledge, were admitted to the sacrament of a new birth. None else was to have the benefit of spiritual regeneration. But light fell into the darkness, and among the despised shûdras poets arose who composed out of the world-old nature lore, magic and exorcism, another Sanskrit hymnal for the use of the people. This is the ATHARVA VEDA, which

[1] I.e. hymns of praise, arranged in ten mandalas or cycles of song.

had to struggle for centuries before the twice-born would reluctantly give it a place in their sacred canon.[1]

While the Rig Veda consists of prayers to the bright elements of nature, the Atharva spells are pervaded by a dread of her dark aspects, and a hankering after occult powers. The Atharva collection, though based on immemorial tradition, is chronologically younger than either the SÂMA VEDA, a book of chants compiled from Rig passages, or the YAJUR VEDA, which contains the Vedic liturgy appointed to be read at sacrificial services.[2]

. . . .

[1] The Laws of Manu do not count the Atharva among the books of the Vedic canon, and the brahmins of the Dekhan reject it even now as apocryphal. The Buddhist Nikâyas ignore the Atharva altogether.

[2] The geographical area of the Rig Veda is confined to the Punjab, and does not yet extend to the Gangetic shores. The Atharva charms represent a stage of culture even older and more primitive, but incantations continued to be added long after the Rig lyrics were complete in that final form which we possess. This accounts for the absence of the king of beasts, most to be dreaded and most powerful, from the Rig fauna, whereas Atharva poetry is familiar with the flecked native of the jungle swamps of Bengal. Subsequently, the tiger's name served as a title of pre-eminence, and the animal's skin became symbolical of royal power. At the coronation ceremony the Râja, clad in a tiger's skin, was enthroned on the "lion-seat". Lion and tiger were looked upon as joint-rulers of the wild life in the forest.

After the creation of the world the golden age commenced. Peace and unity reigned on earth, and all men walked with God. Next came the age of silver, when mankind turned aside from the Divine Will, and everybody followed his own direction. Strife and bloodshed came into existence, but God was merciful, and separated the sexes, creating male and female, that love once more might bind the self-willed race. No sooner did the heart feel drawn to outward things than man lost his power of introspection. The five organs of sense were evolved in order that gods and mortals might quench their thirst for worldly pleasures. Indra, delegated by the other gods, approached the throne of the Godhead, and said: "O Brahma, we wish to feast our eyes and ears on a dramatic spectacle; deign to create the merry play for our enjoyment". And the Creator nodded graciously, and fell into a profound meditation. And out of the Divine Thought sprang the NÂTYA VEDA, that is, the Veda of the Theatre.[1] Such was the Will of the Lord who made

[1] A corruption of nâtya (dancing, acting) or some cognate word is nautch-girl—the name given to a professional dancer in India.

the fifth Veda, drawing the quintessence of the drama out of the four Vedas—dance from the Rig, song from Sâma, mimicry from Yajur, and passion from Atharva. Brahma then summoned Vishwakarma, celestial architect, that he might build a stage in Indra's heaven. The sage Bharata was appointed as theatrical manager and as conductor of the heavenly performances.

Such is the mythical account of the origin of the Indian theatre. In reality, it originated from the ancient custom of reciting the national poetry at social and religious gatherings. The Gangetic tribes were renowned for their gifted bards. The very words bhârata and mâgadha came to mean "minstrel, actor".[1] Bâna, who wrote his famous novel in the age of the Arabian Prophet, relates that the Hindu epics used to be read aloud in various places of worship throughout Kanouj, and that these public recitals were so excellent that royalty often attended. In the rainy season the lecturer's place was at the reading desk in the city temples, but during the fine months of the year the evening entertainment was

[1] Even now actors are called bhats in India, but the name is not directly derived from bhârata.

given on the village green. A fellow-actor expounded the Sanskrit verses to the illiterate villagers in their local patois. The reading of the Mahâ-Bhârata would last several weeks, being continued night after night. So keen was the interest taken in the subject that the dire misfortunes of the Pândava brothers called forth many a sob and tear, whilst their happy return to Hastinapur was hailed with exclamations of joy and sighs of relief, the cottages within earshot being illuminated. When Sanskrit became too choice and high-flown for light street gossip and plain home talk, the prâkrits or vulgar tongues of India pushed themselves more and more to the front. The bhâratas and mâgadhas began to introduce vernacular versions of both epics, and gradually discarded bookish Sanskrit altogether. The interpreter, being needed no longer, henceforth took part in the recitation. Musical accompaniment and dramatic gestures added to the success of the two performers.

The oldest Indian dramas, or rather colloquies (sanvâdas), were not composed in Sanskrit, but in Prâkrit. The Mahâ-Bhârata and Râmâyana supplied no end

of subjects, even as the Bible was the inexhaustible source of the mysteries and miracle plays in medieval Europe. Indeed, originally the Prâkrit sanvâdas were mysteries too, either Krishna or Shiva acting and dancing the principal part. Favourite episodes from the Govinda's eventful life were the "Slaying of Kansa the Tyrant" and the "Binding of the Heaven-storming Titan".[1] Large crowds came to witness these open-air spectacles. The grand finale, a merry roundelay of the bright-eyed Gopis, proved a special attraction. Rival worshippers flocked in equal numbers to the wanton bacchanals held in honour of Shiva. The Vedic priesthood endeavoured to expunge whatever was lascivious or farcical in the popular cult of the two primitive gods, but the sanvâdas, with all their rippling laughter and gross licence, survived, and were even cultivated in Sanskrit literature. Some Vedic hymns have quite a dramatic character.[2] The warfare of the elements is the ever-recurring theme of the sacred Rig

[1] Bali.

[2] "Les dialogues védiques", says Prof. Sylvain Lévi, to whose sound scholarship this volume is indebted for much valuable information, "ne sont ailleurs que des drames rudimentaires."

lyrics, and after once hymning and glorifying the striking cosmic phenomena, what was more natural than to enact the "divine persons" with dance and song on high sacrificial feast days? Thundering Indra and his wild mountain host, the whistling maruts or storm-gods; irate Agni leaping forth in the red flash of lightning; the glistening raindrops trembling with joy at their release from the burst cloud-castles; the blushing dawn announcing victorious Sûrya (the rising sun), and the dancing sunbeams upholding his gleaming banner triumphantly—forces of nature, dread or jubilant, are the dramatis personæ in the extant sanvâda hymns. But the Vedic dialogues reflect the afterglow rather than the first morning flush of the rude representations, staged in the vulgar tongue, of Krishna's and Shiva's ancient mysteries. Again, the sublime converse between Krishna and Arjun, told with consummate art in the Bhagavad Gîta, and the mystic colloquies held by Shiva and Kâli, according to the Tantras, are but a late development of the old Prâkrit sanvâdas which, even in the age of the Rig Veda, were no longer fully understood.

Every literary tongue is a stanch conservative, but the people's speech constantly fluctuates and is ever reconstructed. Consequently, writings in dialect are soon antiquated and void of interest save for the philologist, whereas a great national literature outlives the nation. The cherished traditions of the vanished Prâkrit theatre, of which we know nothing but that it must have existed, were silently absorbed by the nascent Sanskrit drama. The earliest Sanskrit plays which are preserved suddenly flash upon our sight like lightning when it breaks through a dark thundercloud. They seem perfect and full-grown as Minerva when she leapt in complete armour from Jove's creative forehead. The countrymen of Homer may well have doubted the miraculous conception of the goddess of wisdom, and questioned her fabled birth without ancestral lineage, but it is quite certain that Kâlidâsa, who generally opens the list of playwrights in native primers of Indian literature, was but the heir and successor of a long line of distinguished Sanskrit dramatists—Saumilla, Bhâsa, and others whom the poet himself acknowledges. These, too, were undoubtedly preceded by

reputed writers of Prâkrit plays. This view is corroborated by the existence of an old Sanskrit treatise on dramatic art. The essay, which is ascribed to the sage Bharata, abounds in technical Prâkrit terms, most of them relating to scenic details. Bharata enumerates, at great length, those prâkrits or dialects which, in accordance with established custom, might be used for stage purposes.[1] The subsequent authors of Sanskrit dramas faithfully upheld the theories laid down by Bharata. Indeed, minor rôles were never composed in Sanskrit; the stately tongue would have sounded ludicrous on the homely lips of the vulgar who crowd and enliven the Indian stage. English literature exhibits a similar feature Guy Mannering, gentleman, does not use sailor slang like Dick Hatteraick, the smuggler, and the provincialisms and grammatical blunders of Adam Bede's old mother widely differ from the cultured and urbane style of the Rev. Mr. Irwine. King Henry the Fifth does not speak broken English like his French lady-love, and Dickens's novels display every shade of metropolitan jargon. In the dramatic literature of India, the

[1] The very word nâtya (stage acting) is a Prâkrit term.

prâkrits hold exactly the same position. They appear amidst the glossy Sanskrit dialogue like a shabby camel driver among the rich and elegant court dresses of a native durbar. The part of the vidûshaka or jester is written, as a rule, in a dialect of the eastern provinces. Scoundrels are made to talk Ujain slang, and intriguers a patois of the Dekhan. Shâkâri, another corrupt dialect, seems to be ultimately derived from the Shakas or steppe riders who invaded India at various times. Here they learned to speak Prâkrit, but peculiarities of speech such as the sound given to sibilants showed their foreign nationality, just as the pronunciation of *r* or *th*, if nothing else, betrays a French or German resident in England. Soldiers and salesmen, publicans and pastrycooks, and the many other trades and professions introduced in the Indian theatre, all speak a prâkrit of their own, varying but slightly from one another. Gods and brahmins, kings and nobles, converse in faultless Sanskrit, but women speak Prâkrit. In one play, a celestial congratulates Shiva and Uma on the occasion of their marriage; the bride is addressed in Prâkrit, the bridegroom in Sanskrit.

The Agra district is the holy land of Krishnaism. Shauraseni, the medieval speech of the Agra populace, is frequently met with in Sanskrit plays. The Krishna cult has been successfully revived in Bengal, and numerous yâtras or melodramas have been composed in honour of the god. Yâtras are very popular in the Presidency, and preserve the Shauraseni dialect, which has long changed from a vulgar to a sacred tongue.[1]

Bharata, who has become the tutelary deity of the Indian theatre, is not a his-

[1] The gentle art of poetry was cultivated at Magadha, and after the rise of the Guptas, at the Courts of Kanouj and Berar. Mâgadhi and Shauraseni, the two leading Prâkrits, originated, the one in Oudh, and the other west of Kanouj. Queen Damayanti, who knew the magic of soul-stirring song, was a native of Vidarbha, as Berar was then called because of its "grassless" plains. At one time, the mahâ-râshtra or "great kingdom" of Berar extended from the Vindhya slopes to the river Krishna, and touched the western and the eastern seas. The diction of the Vidarbha poets became a standard of literary grace and simplicity. Under their refining influence, the Magadha patois that prevailed at Berar was moulded into Mahârâshtri, which Dandin, a Kanouj romancer of the seventh century A.D., exalts above all other prâkrits. Mahârâshtri, after giving birth to Marathi, the language of the Mahrattas, shared the fate of Pâli, and became a priestly tongue. The sacred writings of the Jains, a brother-sect of the Buddhists, with whom they hold many doctrines in common, are partly composed in Mahârâshtri. The relation of Prâkrit and Pâli to Sanskrit is fully discussed in the *Short History of Indian Literature*, chapter xix.

torical person, but a symbolic name like Vyâsa or Manu. The treatise which goes by his name is very prolix, and may be an amplification of the Bhârata Sûtras which are lost. It is to these sûtras, or stage directions for the use of bhâratas or actors, that Bharata owes his imaginary existence. They were written in Sanskrit, but their ultimate source was obviously some Prâkrit dramaturgy. The sûtras must be very old, since they were studied at the Universities of Hindustan before the Macedonian regiments set foot on Indian soil. The Bhârata Sûtras are mentioned by Pânini, the greatest of Indian grammarians, who is generally referred to the fourth century B.C.[1] The aphorisms were still extant at the time of Alfred, King of England, when Shivaswâmi, an Indian wit, rudely compared their obscure style to the dark waters of the Jumna. As Christian principle rests on the precepts of the Church, and as English law is administered in agreement with precedent, so the Sanskrit theatre has conformed to the rules laid down in the

[1] In the history of linguistic science, Pânini's elaborate Sanskrit Grammar is as epoch-making as the masterpieces of Grimm, Zeuss, Diez in the cognate fields of Teutonic, Celtic, and Romance philology.

Bhârata Sûtras. They were held almost sacred by Kâlidâsa and other dramatists. What wonder then that a myth arose declaring that the sage Bharata had copied them from the fifth Veda, which was believed to be a creation of Brahma himself.

3. An Indian Love Story

On the wings of song I carry my beloved to the fairy banks of the Ganges (Heine).[1]

In the days gone by when celestial nymphs did not disdain to descend on earth, and bestow their affections on mortal kings and heroes, and when the gods made known their will through the mouths of seers and prophets, there lived in the north of India a royal sage, King Vishwâmitra, who had renounced the glories of dominion and the pleasures of earth, to attain the more lasting joys of heaven. So austere were his devotions, and so rigid his penances, that nature could no longer withhold her secrets from him, and he was able to direct her occult forces.

[1] Auf Flügeln des Gesanges,
Herzliebchen, trag ich dich fort,
Fort nach den Ufern des Ganges:
Dort weisz ich den schönsten Ort.

The heavenly host became jealous of the saint's increasing power, and they called on Indra, the supreme god, and said: "Frustrate, O mighty one, the full fruition of Vishwâmitra's piety, otherwise he might endanger even your well-established position". And Indra gravely listened to the representations of the sub-gods, and feeling uneasy lest St. Vishwâmitra should really overthrow him, and take his place in heaven, he bade Menaka, a beautiful fairy, go down to the shores of the river Gautami, where the yogi sat near the roots of venerable trees, his passions subdued, and his mind withdrawn from the world, and by her youthful charms disturb the profound meditation of the self-centred sage. Menaka, by the skill of her sex, succeeded only too well with Vishwâmitra. Desire arose in him, and from his and the nymph's embraces a baby-girl was born, destined to be the tribal mother of powerful nations in the time to come.

After the birth of the child, Menaka, by the will of Indra, reascended to heaven, and left the babe embedded in soft green moss, the cloudless Indian skies smiling on her through the waving leafage over-

head, and gentle breezes kissing her to sleep, while the running brook by her side murmured a sweet lullaby. But Vishwâmitra felt humiliated that the gods had foiled his aspirations, and that he had allowed himself to yield to the allurements of a nymph. In his shame and resentment, he left the Gautami valley, and walked towards the setting sun into the wilds and solitude of the Punjab forests, vowing under no consideration to be drawn back to the household life, but to live alone in holy communion with his great soul, far away from the haunts of men, in congenial seclusion. And at last silence fell on his troubled breast, and he heard a voice saying: "Of your vow I approve, my son, but not of the disregard for your child." And lo! a flock of shakunta birds suddenly darkened the horizon, and fluttered about the sage as if to remind him of his fatherly duties; and he, the illumined one, understood. Yet, unwilling to break his pledge, and be bound by family ties, Vishwâmitra breathed a holy mantra, to the effect that the little one should be taken care of, and his thoughts took wing, and reached the devout heart of

St. Kanva, sweet singer of the Rig Veda. And Kanva, in eager response to the master's message, set out from his âshram, which lay in lonely woods on the southern slopes of snow-capped Himalay; and while the rishi proceeded along the flower-tufted banks of the foaming mountain stream, large-feathered shakuntas flew before him, and guided his steps to the woodland glen where, in a mossy couch, the tender-limbed babe peacefully slumbered. And St. Kanva took the child up in his arms, and christened her Shakuntala, because kindly shakunta birds had watched over her, and protected her against the dangers of the forest. And Shakuntala grew up in St. Kanva's hermitage under her foster-father's loving care and attention.

Now, the grove where the âshram or hermitage was situated formed part of a large kingdom which, in a later age, was peopled by the powerful Bhârata tribe. But long before the Bhâratas waged their fierce wars in the fertile valley of the Upper Ganges, a renowned King, Dushyanta by name, reigned over their grandsires, and held his illustrious Court in the wealthy city of Hastinapur, not far from

the site of modern Delhi.[1] Dauntless in battle was Dushyanta, and prudent in council; a fine type of the Heroic Age which the Mahâ-Bhârata epic like a gigantic painting unfolds, in gorgeous colours, before our wondering gaze. After attending to the endless petitions and grievances of his subjects, day after day, the conscientious Monarch would gladly relieve the pressure of public business by a week's sport in the richly-stocked woods of his northern provinces. There at least he could forget for a time all state affairs, and delight once more in chasing the foam-flecked buffalo and the black-eyed antelope. One day, when the royal huntsman hotly pursued a swift-footed fawn

[1] Vishwâmitra himself had been the gallant leader of that martial clan. An exquisite folk-ballad, composed in the sanvâda style (Rig Veda III, 33) extols the heroic warrior-saint who led the proud Bhârata host across the rapid currents of the Punjab streams forth into battle.

The suffix in Hastina-pur recurs in metro-pol-is (mother-city). Greek *pol* and Sanskrit *pur* signify the *full* or po-pul-ous "town" contrasted with the deserted jungle. Like a typical Aryan, the monosyllable has travelled extensively. It can be traced from Singa*pore* to Sebasto*pol*, and from Constantino*ple* to Na*ples*, and Greno*ble* in the Alps. Cities of hunters and elephants are implied in the names of Shikar*pur* on the Indus, and Hastina*pur* near Delhi. India, north of the river Krishna, teems with purs or ancient boroughs. Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Jaipur are all in Rajputana.

across the "merry greensward", the terrified deer fled into a sacred grove, as though it expected shelter from the saintly inhabitants, and protection against the deadly arrows of the cruel sportsman. And, indeed, its looks of agony and dumb prayer were not left unanswered, for out of a forest hut came a holy anchorite, and raising his hands he addressed Dushyanta:

"Mighty Sovereign, slay not the helpless creature! The weapons of virtuous kings and warriors should be used for the relief of the oppressed, and not for the destruction of the innocent."

The appeal to virtue and kingly duty was not made in vain to the noble Dushyanta; and humbly saluting the pious recluse, the Monarch dropped his richly-ornamented bow, and begged permission to enter St. Kanva's hermitage, and pay homage to the holy preceptor. That was readily granted, and descending from his hunting-car, the King thus spoke to his charioteer:

"That we stand on consecrated ground we cannot doubt. Hallowed grains lie scattered beneath the aged trees, so that the green-breasted parrot-mothers in yon pendent nests may feed their unfledged

young. Confident are the shy gazelles, not startled at the sound of human voices as in the public parks of Hastinapur. You see the one over there? Look how it skips about with long steps, while others nibble the soft cool grass, now and then pausing with their mouths half open. Tops of kusha grass have been cut for some religious rite, and are sprinkled about. The glaze on these fresh leaves is dull, owing to the smoke which rises from a sacrificial oblation of barley and clarified butter. The young roebucks, without fear at our approach, quictly graze on the pleasant lawn which slopes down to the riverside. But groves devoted to religion should be entered in humbler garments."

And Dushyanta, ever considerate of other people's feelings, took off his jewel-studded hunting-coat, and left it, together with all regal ornaments, in charge of his faithful charioteer, whom he bade return to the forest glade, where the royal tent and pavilion had been pitched. And in the simple wayfarer who now approached the âshram none could recognize royalty any longer. St. Kanva happened to be absent on a pilgrimage, and Dushyanta, attracted

by the beautiful scenery around him, begged leave to enter the garden of the hermitage, then bright with gay flowers and the promise of luscious fruit. A well-kept path led him to a natural bower of jasmine bushes, prettily embellished with large fragments of rough stone. It was indeed a lovely spot, which fairies and genii might have chosen for sport and frolic in a fine midsummer night. The golden sunbeams, from a canopy of purple clouds, streamed through the fragrant morning air upon the pearl-dewed meadows. In the distance the river Malini was winding its graceful course; some amorous flamingos stood on the pebbly bank partly hidden by overhanging branches. Beyond, a grassy plain with browsing chamara herds; and far away a lofty range of hills, bathed in a flood of light, and encircled by flights of blue-necked pigeons. Dushyanta's enchanted eye rapidly passed along the Alpine ridges which gradually died away in the majestic peaks of mist-enwrapped Himâlaya,

> "where musky breezes throw
> Their balmy odours o'er eternal snow".[1]

[1] Wintry *Him*alay is connected with Latin *hiems* (winter).

And the King's vision slowly travelled back again to his nearer surroundings. Almost in front of him there grew a spreading mango tree, a couple of sleepy antelopes crouching in its shade, and mantles of woven bast suspended on its branches, to be dried by the kindly sun-beams. And round the thick stem of the tree a slender creeper twined, in full bloom just then. And in the bloom of youth was the maiden who stood admiring in front of the creeper. Beauty flowed in every movement of her graceful limbs. Sweet-smelling shirîsha blossoms hung behind her delicate ear, the tender filaments waving over her health-glowing cheek. Her wrists were adorned with bracelets made of wild flowers, and she looked like a flower herself, pure and fresh as breath of morning on the pine-clad hills. When Dushyanta beheld her—O miracle of the human heart! —the fair landscape before him lost all its charm, and faded away; and while golden fancies filled his heart, the musical cadence of a girlish voice fell on his ear:

"Do you know, my Anasûya, why Shakuntala gazes on that creeper with such intense delight?"

And the smiling answer came back: "No, indeed, my Priyamvada! unless her eyes are spell-bound, and her ears are charmed with the native music of the mango tree."

"In summer it is pleasant to hear,
In autumn it rustles all withered and sear,
It moans and whistles through the winter drear."

Priyamvada, her bright eyes dancing with merriment, retorted:

"Oh no! that's not what darling Shakuntala has on her mind. 'As the tender creeper has chosen the noble mango for a bridegroom, and lovingly clings to him, thus do I hope to be united to a noble husband one day.' That's what she longs for in her secret heart. Have I not guessed aright, my Shakuntala?"

But Shakuntala, her young face suffused with blushes, said evasively:

"I really must go and water the drooping jasmine, or the blossoms will languish for want of moisture."

So she ran to the fragrant bushes, shamefaced and looking on the ground; and when she raised her soft gazelle eyes, they met Dushyanta's noble face. And hark!

the heart-born god, shaper of form and beauty here below, God Kâma, who ever takes delight in giving pain to lovers, has already strung his flower-wreathed bow, and his never-failing arrow, tipped with the golden flames of love, whizzes along the perfumed breeze, and strikes the heart of fair Shakuntala, the maiden-conqueror of the hero-king whom none could conquer on the battlefield.[1]

Dushyanta greeted her with courteous ease—"May your devotion prosper, holy maid!" And she, in sweet confusion, returned the greeting; but Priyamvada, more self-possessed and ever dignified of speech, on observing a stranger, walked up to him, and bade him welcome in the âshrama.

"Go to the cottage, my Shakuntala!" she said, "and fill a basket with ripe mangoes and rose-apples. Our visitor stands in need of some refreshment, and we must be hospitable, and show due honour to a guest."

Dushyanta begged them not to take any trouble on his account. "Lady, I am not hungry, and your pleasing words are sufficient honour unto me."

[1] God Kâma, the flower-winged archer-boy, is the Hindu Cupid.

Anasûya asked him to be seated, as he must be fatigued after his long journey. "For your accent tells me that you were bred and born far from these rustic parts." And the King, in acknowledging her courtesy, expressed his pleasure at being in such a beautiful place.

"The air is delightful here," he said. "How refreshing is the cool wind which gently moves the bending water lilies in yon pond, and wafts sweet odours from all sides!"

Then they all sat down, and Anasûya enquired:

"Gentle stranger, your refined speech encourages me to ask a question. To what illustrious family do you belong? where is your native country, and who are your noble kinsmen? They must be sorely grieved at your absence. Pray, tell us, what induced you to enter these remote woods, only inhabited by simple anchorites?"

The King, not wishing to make himself known yet, slowly replied:

"Excellent maid, I am a student of the Veda, and dwell in the city of King Dushyanta. Desirous to discharge the religious

duties which our Holy Scriptures enjoin, I have come to this sacred grove, because it is reported to be the sanctuary of all virtues."

"Then be welcome again and again!" exclaimed Anasûya, joyfully, "for you are engaged in the same holy labour as our venerable father Kanva. O that he were here just now, and could converse with you!"

"Indeed, you express my heart's desire," rejoined Dushyanta. Then Anasûya was called away to do some household work, and Priyamvada was busy in the garden. Again, Shakuntala was left alone with the King, and their tremulous voices blended in harmony, and their hearts drew nearer in sweet fellowship, and soul rushed into soul until both were like one. And Shakuntala told her lover the simple story of her uneventful life, and time flew like a dream on the golden wings of love. When Shakuntala spoke of her father, Vishwâmitra, once a mighty ruler in Hindustan, Dushyanta, in order to test her, observed that a poor brahminical student was hardly justified in aspiring to the hand of a king's daughter. Shakuntala wept a little as she made reply:

"As my noble father has renounced kingship for higher, holier things, so I gladly renounce my title to royal descent, if need there be, for thy affection, O thou of priestly caste."

Dushyanta, satisfied with this test of her love, then made himself known to be King in the land, and asked Shakuntala to be his Queen. And as in spring, after soft showers, the pearly drops hanging on bush and tree sparkle like diamonds in the sun, so shining tears still glistened on Shakuntala's radiant face, when Dushyanta put on her finger his signet-ring on which the royal name was engraved.

Priyamvada, divining what had happened, called Anasûya from the cottage, but in the midst of their congratulations and rejoicings a royal courier arrived from Hastinapur in search of the King, whom he had traced to the âshram by the help of the charioteer. The messenger brought grave political despatches which necessitated the Monarch's immediate return to the capital. As it was uncertain how long Dushyanta would be absent on the military campaign which he anticipated, it was agreed between the betrothed to solemnize

their nuptials at once. The King promised to send a befitting suite of high-born officers and noble matrons, to conduct Queen Shakuntala from the hermitage to the palace, with all honours due to her exalted station. On the evening of the following day, the reluctant Monarch was obliged to leave.

After his departure, the young wife was often seen musing in the jasmine bower where she had first met her lover. Now, one day, a religious mendicant passed St. Kanva's hermitage, and seeing Shakuntala, asked her for a morsel of food and a cup of water, but she, intent on nothing but her absent lord, did not heed the request. Then the old man's wrath blazed up, being kindled by what seemed to him intentional neglect, and evil-boding were the words he spoke:

"As you are so utterly regardless of holy friars' needs, even so shall he, on whom your present thoughts are fixed, fail to remember you when as a humble petitioner you approach him."

Shakuntala's fancy was too fully preoccupied with anxious thoughts about Dushyanta to be even conscious of the ill-

wishes which her absent-mindedness had drawn on her. But Anasûya had been an involuntary witness of the painful scene. In her excitement and sorrow, she ran up to the friar, and, falling at his feet, tried to appease him:

"Holy man, forgive, I entreat you, the offence of an amiable girl who has the highest veneration for you, but, distracted by an excess of love, she did not even know that you spoke to her."

The gentle appeal had the desired effect, and softened the proud heart to which it was addressed.

"Maiden," returned the mendicant, "my words cannot be recalled, but the spell which they have raised shall be broken, and the King's failing memory be restored the moment he sees the ring which Shakuntala has received from him."

The mysterious stranger then disappeared, and Anasûya, to spare the feelings of Shakuntala, resolved for the present to conceal from her what had occurred.

And the days rolled on, and the weeks passed by, but no news came from Dushyanta. Shakuntala often looked pensive and sad, but never harboured any mis-

givings as to his faithfulness. "She touched her lute, and petted her birds, and slowly counted, amid tears and deep-drawn sighs, the long and weary hours that used to be like minutes." Her own faith was so strong and pure that she could not disbelieve in him.

> "Trusting as the moments fly,
> Trusting as the days go by!"

Yes, trust she would. But why had he not sent the promised escort? No ill could have befallen the great King without her hearing of it. Ah, perhaps he did not like her to arrive at Court during his absence, but rather meant her to stay at home until his return from the campaign. Yes, it must be that; it was all done out of consideration for her comfort. Poor Shakuntala! She was quite unaware of the potent spell and its evil effect on her husband, who had long returned to Hastinapur. But his memory was impaired, his conjugal affection destroyed, and he had lost all recollection of his wedded wife.

And the seasons followed each other in due succession, until genial spring clad

hill and dale once more in festive garb. Shakuntala waited and trusted still. She felt somewhat troubled at her husband's prolonged absence, and at the thought that her foster-father might disapprove of her secret marriage. St. Kanva had only just come home from the long pilgrimage which he had undertaken, and celebrated his safe return by a sacrifice to the gods. And as he worshipped before the consecrated hearth where the sacramental fire was blazing, and chanted holy Vedic hymns, a voice spake from out the sacred flame:

"Know, pious brahmin, that your adopted child has received from Dushyanta a ray of glory destined to rule the world even as the sacrificial wood becomes impregnated with mystic fire."

St. Kanva then knew, and seeing Shakuntala embraced her tenderly.

"Sweet child, be comforted. I know about your marriage, and give my consent with all my heart. May the son to whom you will give birth, bright as the rising day star, become a wise and beneficent ruler of India! But it is in accordance with the precepts of our holy religion that a

Prince should be born in his father's house, and so I have decided to send you to the palace of your rightful lord. Be ready by to-morrow morning, beloved child. The matron Gautami and our pious brother Shârngarava shall accompany you to Hastinapur. Dry your tears, my Shakuntala! I, too, am grieved that we must part. Think of all the joy and love which await you in your new home, and which you so well deserve, dear child!"

Next day, at sunrise, Shakuntala uplifted her beaming face to the golden dawn, and prayed:

"O brilliant goddess, whose daily awakening sheds gladness over everything, let me adore thy divine splendour which once more has chased away the shadows of the dark-winged night. O radiant dawn, dispel all darkness and distrust from my frail heart; and as trees and blossoms, in this gladsome springtime, shine brighter in thy roseate light, grant, mighty goddess, that I, thy humble devotee, and the unborn child may find favour in King Dushyanta's sight."

She had not gone far from the cottage when she met Anasûya, who brought gar-

lands of young leaves and flowers to adorn her friend with these simple tokens of her love, on the last morning which Shakuntala spent at her forest home.

"A Queen deserves far richer apparel," began Anasûya, "than these rude flowers; but they are the gayest ornaments I could find in the woods."

While the two friends caress and kiss each other, the rustling breeze softly whispers to the tree-tops, until the wood nymphs who abide in them shake their leafy crowns, and shower lavish gifts at the Queen's feet. There is a dainty wedding gown, glittering as though woven with pale moonbeams and twinkling stars, and jewels worthy of a Queen are sparkling on the emerald green like dewdrops when they catch the first beam of the morning sun.

Just then St. Kanva came up. He gave his blessing to Shakuntala, and praised her goodness before all the forest:

"O ye green things of the earth, and ye forest trees, to-day our Shakuntala is going to the palace of her chosen lord. She who gave you water first before she drank of it, and out of love for you plucked not

one of your tender leaves, though she would have liked to decorate with them her flowing tresses; she whose chief delight was in the season of spring, when your branches, ye trees of the grove, are bespangled with young blossoms."

And hark! a tuneful response from invisible fairies was wafted through the scent-laden air:

"May the Queen's path be attended with prosperity! May propitious breezes scatter the fragrant dust of gay blossoms for her delight! May brooks of clear water, verdant with lotus leaves, refresh her as she journeys! And may shady branches be her defence against the scorching sunbeams!"

And the glad music filled Shakuntala's soul with joy, and, walking round the trees, she blushed and smiled as she bowed to the unseen nymphs.

Meanwhile her travelling companions and Priyamvada had arrived, the hour of parting being near at hand. All living things in the grove seemed to bemoan Shakuntala's departure. No longer fed the wistful gazelles on the delicious grass; the peahens had stopped their coquettish

dance on the lawn; the very plants had lost their strength, and dropped pale leaves. The Queen, seeing her favourite mâdhavi plant covered with beautiful pink blossoms, exclaimed:

"Most radiant of twining plants, let me embrace thee for a last time, and thou return my caresses with thy pliant arms! Though removed far away, I shall always remember thee, sweet plant; but now I must leave thee to the care of my two friends."

Priyamvada and Anasûya sobbed aloud:

"Alas! dearest Shakuntala, when you are gone, in whose care shall we be left?"

But Kanva gently rebuked them:

"Our Shakuntala ought rather to be strengthened by your cheerfulness than depressed by your tears."

And so the little group moved on until they came to the end of the grove,—about a day's journey from the caravan road which led to Hastinapur. Suddenly Shakuntala called out with a start:

"What's that clinging to my skirt, and holding me back? Do look, Anasûya!"

And lo! there was a little fawn, looking up with gently pleading eyes, and un-

willing to leave his protectress who had so often fed him with a handful of grains, and smeared his bleeding mouth with healing oil when the sharp blades of grass had wounded it.

"Tender fawn," cried Shakuntala, "why do you look so distressed now that I am about to leave our common home? As I reared you when you had lost your mother, who died soon after your birth, so will my foster-sisters look after you when we two are separated. Go back, my pet, go back, for we must part."

Shârngarava now reminded her not to tarry any longer.

"The sun has risen to a considerable height; let the Queen hasten her departure!"

And turning to his teacher, he enquired:

"Holy sage, be pleased to tell me how I am to address the King when I present Shakuntala to him."

St. Kanva remained silent, but Anasûya observed:

"Look at this water-bird, my Shakuntala. His mate is almost hidden by white lotuses, but you can hear her shrill cries. Yet he disregards her call, and, dropping

from his yellow beak long fibres of juicy stalks, gazes at you affectionately. How sad it must be to be neglected by those nearest and dearest to us! My friend, should the virtuous monarch not recollect you at once, promise me to show him your engagement ring."

Shakuntala turned deadly pale, and said:

"What do you mean, my Anasûya? My heart flutters at the mere thought of your cruel suggestion."

And her tears flowed fast. But Priyamvada, ever discreet and gentle, spoke soothing words:

"Weep not, my sister. Love often raises spectres of woe which are dispelled by reality as bad dreams by the morning light."

St. Kanva now raised his voice:

"My son Shârngarava, remember, when you present Shakuntala to the King, to address him in this manner: 'Most gracious Sovereign, we who dwell in holy âshrams are poor in gifts, but rich in devotion. O King, this is Kanva's message to thee: The contract of marriage, reciprocally made between thee and my daughter, I confirm with sincere regard.

Since thou art known to be the most honourable of men, and my Shakuntala is the image of virtue, your union will prove a happy one. Receive her then out of my hands, great King, and may she always be honoured by thee and looked upon with tender affection.'"

"My child," proceeded the sage, "when you are settled in the palace of your husband, show becoming reverence to him, and to those whom he reveres. In your conduct to the domestics be kindly, never proud, and always just. On no occasion seek eagerly for your own gratification. By such behaviour a young wife gains respect. And now, my well-beloved, give me and your two sisters a parting embrace."

Shakuntala, a big tear lurking under her silken eyelashes, pleaded:

"Dear father, must Anasûya and Priyamvada return to the hermitage?"

"Yes," answered the old man; "they too must be suitably married, and it would not be proper for them to visit the city."

Once more they all embraced before they parted.

Shakuntala was just about to disappear

behind the forest trees when St. Kanva waved his hand, and called out after her:

"Shivena gamyatâm, Shakuntale, gamyatâm shivena!" ("May your journey be auspicious, my Shakuntala, an auspicious journey!")[1]

The sage then turned back, and, holding one hand over his eyes,—

"Ah me!" he thought, "my unstable mind has again attained its due balance after the departure of my Shakuntala. In truth, a daughter must sooner or later be the property of another man, and having now sent her to her rightful lord, I feel relieved and tranquil again, like a trustee who has returned a precious deposit of which he had charge to the legitimate owner."

4. The Fatal Ring

When Dushyanta was informed that a brahmin had arrived at his capital from the northern provinces with a message from a saint, the pious King at once sent

[1] The flashing stormcloud which purifies the air is called shiva (auspicious) in the Rig Veda, and was subsequently chosen by the brahmins as a symbol for the Deity who destroys the impure and ungodly. Shivena means "with Shiva; with God's blessing". Gamyatâm = may you go.

one of his noblest officers to conduct the holy man to the palace, and receive him with all honours due to the priestly caste. Shârngarava, closely followed by Gautami and Shakuntala, was ushered into the royal presence. Dushyanta was busy meting out judgment and equity alike to the rich and poor, and the young brahmin exclaimed enthusiastically:

"It is ever thus! fertile trees are bent by an abundance of fruit, clouds are brought low when they teem with salubrious rain, and the real benefactors of mankind are neither elated by riches nor puffed up by success. Sire, may victory always attend thy flag, and may the gods bless our beloved Sovereign!"

To the King's gracious enquiry if St. Kanva prospered, and what his announced message conveyed, the self-confident answer was given:

"Great Monarch, descendant of a hundred Kings! they who gather the fruits of devotion may command prosperity. My venerable teacher salutes thee, O Mahâ-Râja, and enquires whether the royal arms are successful. This is his message: 'Illustrious King! the contract of marriage made

between thee and this my daughter I confirm with sincere regard. And since thou art known to be the most honourable of men, and my Shakuntala is the image of virtue, your union will prove a happy one. Receive her then out of my hands as thy lawful wife; and may she always be honoured by thee, Sir King, and looked upon with tender affection.' "

Shakuntala, her large lotus eyes bent on the ground, felt her heart throb violently—"O my heart, why dost thou palpitate? Remember thy lord's affection, and be calm!"

While Shârngarava was speaking, an expression of the utmost amazement passed over the King's features. And with a touch of scorn he replied:

"What do you say, Sir Monk? that I am the lady's husband? You seem to have an inventive turn of mind."

Shakuntala almost fainted with anguish, and heaved a sigh—"O my heart, thy fears have proved just!"

But Shârngarava retorted with indignation:

"Does it become a powerful Monarch to deviate from the path of religion and

honour, merely because he repents of his engagements? Indeed, earthly power and greatness seem to intoxicate the mind, and render even great Kings fickle and arbitrary."

The virtuous Dushyanta did not resent the rude speech, but rejoined calmly:

"I have no knowledge of this lady, far less of my alleged marriage to her. How then can I lay aside all consideration for my military caste, and admit to my palace a young woman who obviously belongs to another husband?"

"Ah me," cried Shakuntala, "the tree of my hopes, which had risen so luxuriantly, is broken down all at once. O my husband, do you not know me any longer?"

Her tears flowed copiously, and she leaned for support on Gautami.

"It is evident," returned Dushyanta with bitterness, "that this beautiful woman has been instructed, for some base purpose, to vilify my name, and drag me down from the dignity which I have hitherto supported. Thus does a stream which has burst its banks, and changed its placid course, uproot the noble trees which grow aloft by the riverside."

"If he has no longer any affection for me," thought Shakuntala, almost bereft of hope, "what is the good of recalling the past with all its sacred joys of love? Yet I will try!" and gathering up fresh courage, she addressed Dushyanta, the colour mounting to her pallid cheeks:

"O my husband! or if the just application of this holy word be still doubted by you—my King! if you have said all this from mere want of recollection, let me restore the King's memory by showing him a gem which, on a happier day, his lavish hand bestowed on me. But oh! where is my ring? Ah, I unhappy woman, I have lost it."

"Poor child," said Gautami, weeping herself, "the ring must have dropped from your finger when you washed your face in the Sachitîrtha pond where we rested yesterday."

Dushyanta shook his head disdainfully, but Shakuntala, in an agony of despair, roused herself to a last effort, and exclaimed:

"O thou of Puru's race, King Dushyanta, I will remind you of another incident. Do you not remember the day

when we sat in the fragrant jasmine bower, and you poured water into your hollow hand out of a cup-shaped lotus leaf? A little fawn which I had reared came near, and you said kindly: 'Gentle fawn, drink first.' But he would not drink out of a stranger's hand, yet took the water eagerly from mine, and you said with increasing tenderness: 'Indeed, all creatures love their likes. You, my Shakuntala, and the soft-eyed fawn are both children of the forest; both equally simple and sweet.'"

"Oh, do not let me hear any more of these honeyed falsehoods," cried Dushyanta impatiently.

Thus publicly insulted and disgraced, Shakuntala drew herself proudly up, and spoke with scorn-flashing eyes and passion-raised voice:

"O void of honour, you measure everyone by your bad heart. Was ever Prince like you that wears the bright garb of virtue and religion, but in truth is a base deceiver, treacherous like a deep well whose mouth is overgrown with smiling plants?"

Icy, but free from malice, came back the King's reply:

"The heart of Dushyanta, young woman, is known to all, but your own heart is betrayed by your present bad behaviour."

Shakuntala covered her face, and sobbed like a little child. Shârngarava, whose eyes were fixed on the King, could hardly suppress his righteous anger.

"O Mahâ-Râja," he said at last with forced calmness, "we have obeyed the commands of our holy preceptor, and now beg leave to retire. Shakuntala is your wife by law, no matter if you acknowledge or desert her. Come, sister Gautami, let us depart."

The two left the Council Chamber. Shakuntala bemoaned her adverse fortune, and prayed to the gods that she might be taken to some retreat where none would stand between her shame and conscience. And Menaka, her mother in Indra's heaven, took pity on her unhappy child. Dressed in white robes of light, the nymph descended from her bright abode, and raising Shakuntala above the dark earth, guided her into the realms of peace.[1]

[1] Mephistopheles has been allegorically interpreted as Faust's rebellious intellect, and Shakuntala as Dushyanta's neglected

. . . .

Several years had passed, when one day a poor fisherman who plied his scanty trade in the lake district of Sachitîrtha caught a large carp, and upon opening the fish discovered a costly ring in it. The old man went up to Hastinapur, and

soul. Sanskrit poets, who, like the rest of their Indian countrymen, firmly believe in transmigration, compare the "migrating soul" to a migratory shakunta. The word may be a reduplicative noun like cock or cuckoo, and would then be literally the Greek kyknos, our cygnet. Another bird of passage, the milk-white hansa, has become the Hindu emblem of undying love, which, out of its native heaven, flutters but timidly in the dull cage of flesh. A flame-beaked hansa disclosed King Nala's worth and yearning to the "soul-disturbing" (chitta-pramâthin) royal maid of Vidarbha.

> "To Vidarbha's stately city flew the wild swans tinged
> with gold",

narrates the Mahâ-Bhârata.

The poet-symbolists of Egypt and Greece painted boundless love as a purple-hued phœnix. The sacred bird is consumed to ashes by his flaming heart, but on love's wings rises transfigured from the pyre.

The pagan Teutons, too, chose the wild swan as a symbol of the coy soul which shrinks from scoffers and sceptics. The soul is a ray of eternal light, and reveals her hidden glory to none but believers who have realized the soul's immortality. In the old German folktales, swan-maidens wed earthly heroes, but quit the earth the moment their husbands harbour the slightest distrust. Lohengrin, swan-knight and guardian of the Holy Grail, leaves Lady Elsa when she doubts and questions him.

The legends of Shakuntala and Parsifal, twin-currents of romance, have sprung from the same fount of Indo-European saga-lore.

offered the ring for sale in the bazaar. When the goldsmith saw the royal initials engraved on the gem, he took it to the palace, and the indignant angler was apprehended as a common thief. The King, however, to the jeweller's astonishment, gave orders to acquit the fisherman, and to reward the innocent man with a handsome sum out of the royal treasury.

As soon as Dushyanta beheld the fatal ring, his broken recollection was restored, and his conjugal affection revived suddenly. Remorse and gloom now clouded the Monarch's mind, and his infamous desertion of Shakuntala burdened his conscience.

"When my darling with her antelope eyes reminded me of our nuptials," he lamented, "the links of my memory were broken, and I basely rejected her without a reasonable cause. But on seeing the fatal gem I remembered everything, and now I yearn for her sweet presence, and cannot bear life, cut off as I am from her dear companionship. Was it a dream that impaired my memory, or an evil charm that made me abandon her, or was my unhappy forgetfulness the well-deserved

penance for sin committed in a previous life? Well, whatever it was that confounded my judgment and obscured my vision, I shall be plunged in lifelong sorrow unless I find Shakuntala again. When I think of her, how she fixed on me her heavenly face, then deluged with tears, I feel as if my heart were pierced with a sharp iron. O my Shakuntala, whom I have treated shamefully and forsaken unjustly, when will this vile traitor, thy repentant husband, be once more blessed with a sight of thee?"

Dushyanta's broken-heartedness was a pleasing sacrifice in the eyes of Heaven, and Indra, regent of the starry skies, sent his celestial chariot, yoked with seven fiery horses, to the despondent King that he might also rise beyond terrestrial gloom.

Dushyanta gladly mounted the resplendent car of the King of kings, and rapidly ascended. The restless steeds rose high above the ocean's vast expanse, and the green, foam-crested waves were aflame with the light of a thousand suns. Far below, the Râja could see flights of cranes ascend, in an ever-lengthening chain, from fen and moor and meadow. And ever

higher was Dushyanta borne, beyond the breezy heights where herds of musk-deer wander, until he could no longer distinguish lowland valleys from high mountain peaks. The vast river systems of India spread out like a glittering net of silver threads, and gigantic Himalay looked like a pretty toy bridge cast from the eastern to the western sea. The King rose higher and higher. The sparkling steeds of Indra had long traversed the region of the gold-tinged clouds, when imperceptibly Dushyanta felt gently drawn back to earth. No sooner came the feeling than like a flash of lightning the radiant sun-car descended, and halted on the Hemakûta Hills, now dipped in mellow evening light, —the abode of holy ascetics.[1] Dushyanta, glad to touch the solid earth again, sat musing on a grey mossy stone by the side of a steep rock. Close to him a beautiful little boy was playing with a lion's whelp, and the King heard him say:

"Open your mouth, baby-lion, I want to count your teeth."

[1] The "snowy heights" of Mount Meru, in the far north, beyond wintry Himalay, were called Hemakûta; the name signifies much the same as Snowdon or Mont Blanc. Chitrakûta, the scene of Râma's exile, means "picturesque heights".

"You naughty child," cried the nurse, "can't you leave the wild animals of the forest alone? Why do you torment them? The old lioness will tear you to pieces if you do not release her young one."

The boy bit his lip proudly, and answered defiantly: "I am not afraid of her."

Dushyanta felt strangely affected by the child's talk and appearance.

> "His brow is like the mountain snow
> Gilt by the morning beam;
> His cheeks like living roses blow,
> His eyes like azure stream."

"How happy must his father be," reflected the pensive King, "when this beautiful child sits by his side, playing with some toy, and prattling brightly, and laughing innocently at every trifling occurrence. Alas! I have no son to cheer my old age, and to perform, when I shall be no more, the funeral rites in my family. Yes, Puru's ancient race will die with me."

Again the old nurse was heard:

"Bharata dear, let the little lion go. I will give you something ever so much prettier to play with."

But young Bharata, with one hand pull-

ing the lion by his mane, stretched out the other, saying:

"Give it first, nurse; in the meantime I will play with the lion."

The King had risen from his seat, and perchance seeing the palm of the boy's extended hand, beheld in the bold lines of its exquisite network the unmistakable signs of future eminence and kingship. The nurse now noticed Dushyanta, and courteously requested him to set the lion free from the grasp of this unmanageable child. The King reproved the boy:

"You, a pious hermit's son, how dare you disgrace your father by such cruelty, when you know that virtue on your part would make him happy? You ought to be ashamed to violate the rules of this consecrated forest. Only hideous black snakes infest the green boughs of a fragrant sandal tree."

The boy made no reply, but let the lion go. Gratified was the old nurse, as she curtsied and said:

"I thank you, gentle stranger, but our Bharata is not a hermit's son as you suppose. Upon my life, wonderful is the likeness between you and him, though you

are no relations. It also surprised me to see how quickly you succeeded in restoring him to his natural good temper; and yet the child has never seen you before."

Dushyanta felt a thrill of unknown joy as he touched Bharata's curly head.

"Honourable dame, if the boy be not a hermit's son, tell me what is his family name?"

And the gladdening answer came back:

"He is King Dushyanta's child, and his mother gave him birth in these hallowed woods."

The royal father, overjoyed at the happy intelligence, fondly caressed his son, and both went to the cottage to find the boy's mother. But there she comes, in mourning weeds, to meet her darling child. Pale are her lips, thin is her body, and her dark, glossy hair is twisted in a single braid.

"Forgive me," implored the King. "Forgive! I have wronged you, but tender love has now replaced hardness of heart."

Shakuntala rejoiced—"Be confident, my heart!" and answered quietly:

"I shall be most happy when the King's anger has passed away."

More she could not say; tears choked her voice. But the floodgates of Dushyanta's breast, so long pent up, burst open, and he cried passionately:

"My best-beloved, banish from your mind the thought of my cruel desertion of you. A violent frenzy had taken possession of my soul; but now, by the mercy of Heaven, thou bright day-star, I have found thee at last, sweet charmer, never to leave thee again."

And, sobbing, he fell at her feet.

"Rise, my husband! My happiness has long been interrupted, but now gladness dawns after the night of grief, since my dear lord still loves me."

Shakuntala's face shone as if the lights of Heaven were reflected in it when Dushyanta approached her. Fresh and sweet she looked like some mountain flower in which the dewdrops tremble at sunrise. Gently he wiped her tears away, and said:

"Thus I efface the memory of all tears which, in my dark hour, I have made thee shed."

And suddenly sweet light, bright colour,

rich scent, and floods of music filled the space, and Menaka, the radiant nymph, stood by their side.

"Yes, dear child," said she, "he always loved you. An imprecation obstructed the fountain of his love, but when he saw the fatal ring again, his loyal heart, dead to all else, was true to you. All this remained hidden from you by Indra's wise will, so that your wedded bliss might be the fuller and richer after your sore trials were ended. Hence cease, my son, to charge yourself with an offence which you committed unknowingly and therefore innocently."

"Then my name is cleared from infamy," rejoiced Dushyanta. And Menaka gave them a mother's holy blessing.

"My Shakuntala is the model of excellent wives, her son is dutiful, and thou, O King, hast three great advantages—true piety, abundant wealth, and practical benevolence. May the gods increase thy virtues and possessions a hundredfold!"

"Mother," said the King, "I now have reached the pinnacle of earthly bliss, and thy gracious benison gives assurance of happiness both to the Queen and myself.

First comes the flower, then the fruit; friendly clouds gather before soft showers fall; and even so thy kind favours precede our felicity."

Shakuntala simply said:

"Happy am I that my lord who now recognizes me has denied me through ignorance, and not from real aversion."

Menaka then laid her right hand on Bharata's young head.

"Thy heroic valour, my grandchild, shall raise thee to overlordship stretching from sea to sea, before thou shalt have crossed the stormy ocean of this present life. Bharata is thy name, for thou shalt rule unequalled in combat, and shalt support the fruitful earth."[1]

Dushyanta with his family returned to Hastinapur, and during a long and beneficent reign consolidated and strengthened the Empire, and promoted the welfare of his subjects, who loved him for his wisdom and justice, as they did Shakuntala for her gentleness and acts of charity.

It was a time-hallowed custom among

[1] Bharat means "supporting" in Sanskrit, and is derived from the same root as brother, i.e. supporter of the family after the father's death. Bhârata denotes a descendant of Bharata.

the Princes of the royal house of Hastinapur, in the decline of life, to leave their gilded palaces with marble columns and stuccoed walls, and seek humbler mansions in the quiet forest, under spreading trees or in secluded caves, and henceforth to dedicate themselves to austerities and to the service of Heaven.

> "Forsaking worldly cares in life's decline,
> Hastina's kings sceptre and throne resign;
> Assume the garment of the holy sage,
> And spend in thoughts of God their tranquil age."

When the time had come, Dushyanta, full of years, and ripe in knowledge, accompanied by Shakuntala, now a venerable matron, repaired to St. Kanva's hermitage. Kanva was long dead, but St. Shârngarava, being Superior of the holy confraternity, joyfully received the King and Queen; and there they stayed, practising yoga and reading the holy shâstras, until the course of their earthly days was run.[1]

[1] The old Sanskrit books record several instances of crowned heads abandoning the splendour and allurements of a gay Court for the more congenial seclusion in the vana-prastha or forest-upland. In a peaceful hermitage they became absorbed in the contemplation of the divine mysteries,—the uplifted heart partaking of God's very self in yoga or interior communion. The kingly bearing and fearless spirit of the vânaprasthas or forest

The crown of Hastinapur had devolved on Bharata the hero-king, and his descendants were the warlike Bhârata race, renowned in battle, who played such a prominent part in the subsequent history of India during the Heroic Age. Their deadly family feuds, and especially the great war waged on the plains of Kurukshetra between the Kauravas and Pândavas, two mighty brother tribes, have been sung by many a minstrel, in many a popular ballad, in the baronial banquet halls of ancient Hindustan. But the story of Shakuntala, the common mother of the Bhâratas, fell into oblivion for lack of a great troubadour, until, ages hence, Kâlidâsa was born, sweet singer of Ujain, who made Shakuntala the subject of a melodious Sanskrit play.

Kâlidâsa has long descended to his cold tomb. According to a tradition, the poet

hermits, whose beaming eyes shone with the light of God, excited the admiration of Alexander the Great. The royal enthusiast who prized Pindar's lofty strains above earthly music felt the subtle charm of lowly âshrams, the sweet haunt of all the Muses. But the mighty ruler, though accustomed to universal homage, tried in vain to engage some of the Indian munis (recluses) in spiritual converse. Like the Carthusian monks in Western lands, the God-illumined munis observed perpetual silence in their simple woodland retreat.

lies buried on a lonely hill in balmy Ceylon, within hearing of the surging ocean's roar. Forgotten is the site of his green grave; maybe, wild roses bloom even now on it, and the mountain deer which he loved so well graze on it in the spicy morning breeze. But not forgotten is his deathless lay. Hail to thee, Kâlidâsa, Prince among poets, who still thrillest our souls with thy immortal song of sweet Shakuntala!

5. Has Greece Influenced the Indian Theatre?

The origin of the Hindu theatre is wrapped in darkness, and, until fresh evidence be brought to light, the best theory offered is that Kâlidâsa perfected, whereas his forerunners created the Sanskrit drama out of the lost Prâkrit plays, including the sanvâdas or mysteries which were enacted at solemn seasons of periodic sacrifice. Vedic and epic bards alike, as well as the later dramatists, must have felt that Sanskrit was a fitter vehicle than Prâkrit for expressing profound thoughts and sublime sentiments, and stood a better chance of survival than current speech which follows the

changing taste and fashion. Yet, there are well-read scholars who maintain that India has borrowed the drama from Greece. Ever since the days of Alexander the Great, Greek colonies were thriving at the seaports and trading stations of the East. It is quite possible that these settlements of wealthy Greeks kept up a native stage so that they might beguile a few hours pleasantly, after a busy day, just as English officers and civilians frequent the performances of the Simla Dramatic Club. Ujain and Kanouj, where the early Sanskrit theatre took root and flourished, may have come in contact with Greek trade and culture, nay, Kâlidâsa and Bâna had perhaps some acquaintance with Attic wit and letters. Even if all these assumptions were correct, although there is no real basis for them, still the classical theatre of the Hindus would have a just claim to originality. The *Merchant of Venice* is not a mere imitation of an old Italian novel, nor is Goethe's *Iphigenia* borrowed from Euripides, nor La Fontaine's fables from an Eastern source. Genius never copies slavishly, although foreign ideas may awaken a congenial strain in the tuneful

breast. But no direct proof whatever can be adduced that any Hellenic influence was brought to bear upon the Indian drama, which has a thoroughly national foundation. On the contrary, there are weighty reasons for disbelieving in such influences, for Greek and Hindu plays diametrically differ both in arrangement and principle. The Greeks recognize, whereas the author of Shakuntala ignores the unity of time and place. The Greek chorus, in the character of a moral judge, is entirely unknown in his productions. On the other hand, the happy blending of tragic and comic incidents, which is characteristic of Indian quite as much as of Shakespearean plays, is altogether against the rules of the Athenian stage. The keynote of Greek poetry is joy and pride of life, but Sanskrit dramas, though they all end well, generally moralize on the text that life is but vanity and vexation of spirit.

On these internal grounds we contend that the Indian theatre is home-grown, and not a foreign graft. If epic and lyric matured into the drama under Greek skies, why could not Sanskrit literature have passed through a similar process of evolu-

tion? The same sun ripens fruit and corn in Orient and Occident. Does it necessarily follow that American wheat must have been transplanted from Russian soil because it was cultivated in the Mississippi valley later than in the fertile plains of the Volga? or that the German theatre is a Chinese loan because playhouses existed in Peking ever so much earlier than in Leipzig and Weimar? The human mind, given similar conditions, shows the same tendencies and possibilities everywhere, and if dramatic literature originated independently in China and in Greece, well, the same could have happened in India.

6. King Shûdraka

Shakuntala is the daintiest and most graceful of all Sanskrit plays, but the most powerful on the stage is *The Toy Cart*, which was composed in the reign of King Shûdraka, about the sixth century.[1] The unknown author, who enjoyed the royal patronage, gives a graphic picture of social life in medieval India.[2]

[1] Native tradition ascribes the authorship to Shûdraka. *The Toy Cart* was merely dedicated to the King.

[2] The beauties of spring, matchless like maiden's charms,

Âryaka, a young herdsman, had been apprehended and imprisoned by order of King Pâlaka. The Râja, like Krishna's royal kinsman, was troubled because of a prophecy that a shepherd dynasty was to overthrow his own. Pâlaka was a tyrant, and Sansthânaka, the Queen's brother, was a spendthrift and a libertine. One day the debauched Prince molested the beautiful Lady Vasanta, who had been shopping in the bazaar. She took refuge in Châru-datta's house, and begged the poor but virtuous brahmin to protect her against the insolent and vulgar addresses of the unprincipled Sansthânaka. Evening drew near, and as the streets were unsafe at

have suggested such names as May, Violet, or Lily in England, and Mâlati (jasmine) or Vasanta (vernal season) in India. The heroine of *The Toy Cart* is called Vasantasena in the original, but we have taken the liberty to shorten the polysyllable. No doubt, clipped Sanskrit jars on the ears of Oriental scholars, and the only apology we can offer for the various abbreviations introduced in this volume is the convenience of short names, and their consonance with English taste and usage. Phil and Bess are more popular than Philip and Elizabeth, while bus and bike and taxi are quite colloquial expressions. What does it matter after all of how many syllables a word is composed as long as the speaker clearly conveys his meaning? Language is not the only department in nature where form after form is broken up for the sake of adaptation to new environments. All created forms and names are bound to pass through successive stages of growth and decay. Decomposition leads to reconstruction in the revolving cycle of things manifest.

night, Vasanta left her jewellery in the brahmin's charge, and gladly accepted his offer to escort her home.

Soon after, Sharvilaka left Vasanta's house. He kept company with the lady's maid, and dearly wished to purchase the freedom of the slave-girl, so that they might get married. But then he was only a poor working man, and how could he possibly raise a sufficient sum of money? Such were his anxious thoughts when he suddenly overheard the words—"and thank you so much for taking care of my jewels; I am sure to send for them to-morrow morning". The person addressed was Chârudatta. Sharvilaka followed him unnoticed, and when the priest entered his humble home, the thief managed to glide after him into the dark passage. There he waited until all was quiet. It was after midnight that Sharvilaka, with noiseless step and bated breath, felt his way to the bedroom, where, after some search, he hit on the coveted treasure, and made off with it.

Next morning, Chârudatta was in great consternation. If he told the truth, and stated that burglars had broken into a

poor brahmin's house, who would believe him? No; let her rather think of him as a reckless than a dishonest man. So he pretended to have gambled away the entrusted deposit; and wishing to refund the loss to the best of his power, he offered Vasanta his wife's necklace, old-fashioned, but of considerable value. It was the only ornament left to the poor woman. Everything else had long been sold for life's bare necessities.

Sharvilaka, in high glee, related to his sweetheart the adventures of the preceding night. The honest girl was shocked to hear of the theft, and told her lover that she would have no more to do with him until he had restored what she knew belonged to her mistress. Sharvilaka, conscience-stricken and henpecked at the same time, gave up the stolen property, and the maid took the jewels to their rightful owner, with a message that the parcel had been left for Her Ladyship.

But walls have ears. The conversation of the two had come to Vasanta's knowledge, and being pleased with the upright conduct of her maid, she gave her a handsome present in money, and permission to

get married. Good had come out of evil, and Sharvilaka was a happy man when he learned his good fortune. He came to thank Vasanta, and parted with a grateful heart to make the necessary preparations for the wedding. As he opened the front door, a man rushed in, gasping for breath, and anxiously looking for a place of concealment. He had lost every suvarna, he said, and had run away from the gaming table when he could pay no longer; but now the other gamesters were hard at his heels, and if they caught him he would have to go to jail unless his debts were paid. No person in distress ever appealed in vain to the generous Vasanta. She at once satisfied the claims of the importunate creditors. The relieved gambler took a solemn vow to give up his disreputable life, and entered a Buddhist monastery.

Vasanta was deeply touched by Chârudatta's disinterested diplomacy, and had humour enough to fall in with his delicate tactics. So she made up a mournful tale, and acknowledged that she too was addicted to gambling, and had recklessly staked the necklace of the brahmin's wife. "But alas! I lost," speaking with down-

cast eyes, and heaving a gentle sigh. The lady then handed Chârudatta a jewel box, which she begged him to accept in the meantime. On opening the casket the astonished priest recognized the stolen gems, and the mystery of their recovery was speedily cleared up amid much mirth and laughter. The interview ended with mutual assurances of goodwill and love.[1]

As Vasanta was chatting with the brahmin's wife, his youngest boy came running into the room. The little fellow cried piteously; he was tired of playing with his toy cart of burnt clay, and wanted golden playthings such as the son of the rich neighbour had. Vasanta longed to help her impoverished friends without giving offence, which the poor take so easily, and gladly turned the little incident to practical account. Patting the child's head fondly, she gave him a handful of jewels, and said: "Ask dadda to sell these stones, and buy you a toy cart of gold." She then left hurriedly, and the lad stood gazing at the glittering stones with wondering joy.

[1] We have divested Vasanta of all levity and laxity which the reader might attribute to her character, if, in agreement with the Sanskrit text, she had been represented as a refined courtesan like Aspasia of Greece.

During this pretty family scene Sansthânaka was paying a call next door, where the rich folks lived. His palanquin waited outside, and Vasanta, mistaking it for her own, stepped into the vehicle. The bearers, being under the impression that it was the Prince who had entered, moved on to the deer park as usual.

That very day Âryaka, by the help of his friend Sharvilaka, had escaped from the prison cell. No sooner was the flight discovered than a hue and cry was raised, and a hot pursuit began all over the city. The game was well-nigh up; the fugitive expected to be rearrested every moment. How could he baffle the keen-scented police? Bewildered, he dashed past Chârudatta's house, when, by a lucky chance, Âryaka noticed Vasanta's palanquin. If he only succeeded in putting the bloodhounds off the right track! Desperate and regardless of all consequences, the hunted man slipped unobserved into the empty conveyance, and drew the curtain. Vasanta's slaves, never suspecting that they did not carry their mistress, bore Âryaka to her house, where Sharvilaka's girl concealed the exhausted herdsman.

The next to appear on the scene was the King's brother-in-law. When he could not find his carriage, he flew into a passion, and walked off at last, swaggering and swearing loudly. Sansthânaka did not much like to be seen on foot by his fashionable friends, so he cut right across the deer park to the deserted lake at the other end. There the ex-gambler, now a devout Buddhist, was washing his yellow robe. Without the slightest provocation the vicious Prince knocked the harmless monk down, but his vile and cruel temper quickly passed into a fresh channel at the unexpected sight of his palanquin. Sansthânaka called out to the startled liverymen, and poured on them a volley of threatening language and abuse. But on beholding Vasanta, "he gave a whistle long and low", and put his arms round her waist. Disgusted and terrified, she pushed him away; he stumbled, and measured his full length upon the ground. The ruffian got up again, and, white with rage, dragged the unfortunate lady out of the carriage. After dismissing the attendants abruptly, he struck her in the face, and beat her mercilessly until life seemed

extinct. But Sansthânaka was as cowardly as he was depraved. Trembling, he looked about lest somebody should have witnessed his misdeeds. But there was no sign of a human being anywhere. The monster hastily scraped a large heap of dry leaves together, threw them over Vasanta's body, and decamped. In the distance he noticed Chârudatta absorbed in thought, but to the guilty conscience of Sansthânaka it seemed as though the detested priest had watched him.

Vasanta was not dead, but stunned by the heavy blows she had received. As soon as her assailant was gone the Buddhist monk, still faint from loss of blood, came up, and charitably busied himself in reviving his fellow-victim from her deathlike swoon. He fetched water, bathed her wounds, and ministered to all her needs, the more tenderly when he recognized his never-forgotten benefactress.

Sansthânaka bore Chârudatta a secret grudge ever since the priest had offered protection to Vasanta and had foiled his evil intentions. The infamous Prince was afraid of being reported, and, at the same time, anxious to ruin his hated adversary.

He seized the golden opportunity, and with a bold front accused the innocent brahmin of Vasanta's murder. Chârudatta was sent for, and calmly denied the charge. He was so beloved in the city that nobody in the court really believed him capable of the dastardly crime. Yet Chârudatta had to admit that he had been near the lake at the hour when, according to the indictment, the murder was committed. Moreover, Vasanta had been seen in defendant's house on her dying day. Besides, she was rich, while he was poor, and it would not have been the first time that poverty led to crime. Another link in the chain of appearances against Chârudatta was that his informer was the Queen's brother, a man of the highest rank and influence. The kindly judge looked grave as he gave orders to have the indicated place searched for the dead body. When no trace of it could be found, Sansthânaka declared on oath that he had seen the priest murder the woman, and after the foul deed despoil her of all jewellery. "How am I to know what has happened to the corp*sh*e?" he replied sullenly to the interrogating judge; "the villain

might have thrown it in the pond for aught I know."[1]

Just then Maitreya, the happy-go-lucky jester in the play, passed the law courts on his way home; he lived within a stone's throw of Vasanta's house. His friend Chârudatta had begged him to take the jewels back to the lady, who was evidently in a playful mood when she gave them to his little boy. Maitreya was fond of gossip, and as he was not in a particular hurry (he never was), he entered the courts to see what was going on. Good Heavens! there stood his venerable friend, accused of manslaughter. Maitreya could not believe it. On hearing the details, he was unable to restrain his angry passion, and violently denounced Sansthânaka before the assembled court. Had he not seen with his own eyes, but two days ago, how that scoundrel of a Prince annoyed and insulted

[1] The Prince's vulgar language is quite in harmony with his low character. Like the Shaka hordes who adopted a "decadent" prâkrit when they overran India, *Sh*ans*h*thânaka cannot pronounce the letter *s* properly, much as a peasant lad of *Sh*ligo or an illiterate German in New York is *sh*low to under*sh*tand the full value of English sounds. Moreover, Va*sh*anta's loathed admirer affects a taste for literature which is utterly foreign to his base sentiments, and constantlv parades his ignorance by misquoting the national epics.

Vasanta publicly in the street? And was not Chârudatta respected by every townsman for his lofty principles and spotless character? In his excitement Maitreya dropped the jewels, which he was holding under his robe for safety. They were at once identified as Vasanta's property, and Maitreya was arrested on the charge of complicity. Defendant was again cross-examined, and owned that he had handed the incriminating gems to his apparent accomplice. On this additional evidence the jury convicted Chârudatta, and banished him for life. Before the Mohammedan Conquest, reverend brahmins, whatever their crime might be, were exempt from capital punishment. But King Pâlaka took the law into his own hand in Chârudatta's case. Although the Râja had little cause to trust any statement made by his worthless brother-in-law, he was more averse to the publicity of a Court scandal than to the infliction of a grievous wrong. Determined, at all costs, to save the honour of the royal family, the despot not only accepted without question the verdict (though he thought there might have been a miscarriage of justice), but even aggravated

the legal sentence, and signed the condemned man's death warrant. Human respect had stifled the voice of Pâlaka's conscience.

Chârudatta was wonderfully resigned. He looked serene and dignified as the jailers led him to the place of execution. The chandâla was ready to strike the fatal blow when suddenly Vasanta and her Buddhist friend forced their way through the surging crowd, and begged a moment's hearing. The lady had been ill all the time; only this morning the horrible news was conveyed to her sick-bed. And now she was here to bear witness to the truth that the priest was innocent, and his accuser guilty.

The bloodthirsty rabble listened to Vasanta's thrilling tale in deep silence. It was the lull before a storm. "Let His Majesty's orders be carried into effect; put the culprit to death, him of blood royal," was the general outcry. Sansthânaka, who had invited a "smart set" of friends to attend the execution, grew deadly pale. Chârudatta, in a firm and ringing voice, then entreated the people to listen for a moment. When the wild turmoil subsided, he forgave his persecutor, and, with tears

in his eyes, pleaded for the Prince's forfeited life.

"Long live the noble Âryaka!" "Prosperity to King Âryaka!" the burghers shouted in the streets. The old prophecy had come true at last. King Pâlaka lay assassinated in his palace for disregarding the ancient law of the land. Âryaka, whose undeserved misfortunes had aroused general sympathy, was solemnly crowned amid the enthusiastic acclamations of the populace. The new Monarch's first gracious act was to nominate Chârudatta Governor of a province, and give him Lady Vasanta in marriage. Bigamy is not held criminal in India, although monogamy, less costly to the husband, is the rule amongst the middle classes. The ex-gambler was appointed Superior-General of the Buddhist monasteries throughout the country, and Sharvilaka, the reformed thief, Chief of the City Police.[1]

[1] The most recent translation of the play is by W. Ryder (Cambridge, Mass., 1905, $1.50).—Why does not an enterprising theatrical manager produce in cosmopolitan New York or London the best of the world's dramatic literature? Masterpieces like Goethe's *Egmont*, Calderon's *Judge of Zalamea*, or Shûdraka's *Toy Cart*, if only staged and paraphrased well, are sure to be appreciated by large and enthusiastic audiences.

7. Kâlidâsa Again

Soon after Alexander's death, the vast dominions which had been subject to his rule were dismembered, for he had dreamt, no less than the great Corsican, of world-wide conquest rather than of a federated empire. Oriental romance endowed Iskander—that is the Persian name of Philip's warlike son—with magical gifts and superhuman virtues. In the third century B.C., when the Greek dependencies in the East were no longer held together by Iskander's wondrous personality, huge fragments of conquered territory broke off the Imperial colossus, and were tossed about like so many tennis balls between usurper and conspirator. Bactria, a Macedonian colony in Turkestan, alone stood firm and grew powerful, despite all political schemes and diplomatic intrigues. It was owing to the military genius of Seleucus, one of Iskander's ablest lieutenants, that Bactrian rule came to extend from the Syrian Sea to the Indian border. The Seleucides, that is, the successors of Seleucus, erected strong forts along the river Indus, and occupied

Gujarat. Ashoka's son or grandson, being fully awake to the danger which threatened Magadha if the Greek regiments marched further east, sent General Pushpamitra against the foreign invader. Pushpamitra attacked and defeated the Bactrian forces somewhere in the Punjab, and returned home laden with rich spoil and trophies. His Indian countrymen gave him a splendid reception, and fêted him as a national hero, while the victorious troops were vociferously cheered in every town and village through which they passed. Popular sentiment ran high at Patna, where the gallant field-marshal received honours and ovations befitting an emperor or king. Popularity is apt to rouse slumbering ambition, and the native chroniclers relate that about B.C. 180 Pushpamitra overthrew the dynasty of Chandragupta, and succeeded to the Imperial Crown of Magadha.

Pushpamitra's son and successor was Agnimitra, whose suzerainty was acknowledged as far south as Nagpur, where Mâdhava reigned just then. The powerful Râja of Berar had forcibly annexed the little state of Nagpur. King Mâdhava, on offering resistance, was made a prisoner of

war. Princess Kaushiki of Nagpur and her beautiful sister Mâlavika fled in disguise, and joined a travelling caravan which was bound for the capital of Magadha. But alas! a gang of highwaymen waylaid and robbed the traders. The brigands carried Mâlavika off to the Patna slave market, where the attractive girl was purchased for the seraglio of Queen Dhârini. The heavy chain of family misfortunes weighed upon Kaushiki's depressed spirits, and the royal maid, desirous of propitiating dire fate, vowed she would take the veil, and become a Buddhist nun, if ever she reached Magadha safely. In the meantime, Agnimitra's armies marched against Berar to King Mâdhava's rescue.

Such is the historical background of one of Kâlidâsa's plays. The drama is much admired in India, but is inferior, and probably also anterior, to Shakuntala.

Agnimitra falls in love with Mâlavika's portrait, which he has seen in the Queen's apartments. Dhârini is jealous, and takes good care to keep the original out of the King's sight. He consults his vidûshaka or Court jester as to the possibility of an interview with Mâlavika. Gautama—that

is the confidant's name — raises a great argument between the singing master and dancing instructor of the seraglio, and the result is a lively quarrel as to their respective merits. Lovers of Molière's muse will be reminded of the humorous scene where Mons. Jourdain's tutors in fencing and music pass from light words to heavy blows. The politic Gautama pretends to be seriously alarmed at the heated dispute; he advises to refer the controversy to His Majesty, and have it amicably settled. The royal arbiter, in his turn, proposes a sangîta or competitive ballet-concert in which the best pupils are to take part. The sangîta is held accordingly. Mâlavika dances the most difficult steps with perfect ease and beauty. Brilliant is her technique, and full of grace each movement. The enchanted Râja does not take his eye off Mâlavika during the whole performance, and in the end awards the prize to the elated dancing master. The maiden's furtive glances intimate sufficiently that the King's tenderness is not unrequited. An appointment is made, the vidûshaka acting again as go-between. But the Queen's unexpected arrival interrupts unpleasantly

the sweet *tête-à-tête* and the stolen kisses of the amorous couple. A scene is happily avoided by the joyful intelligence, brought at an opportune moment, of a decisive victory which the Imperialists have gained, and of Mâdhava's successful deliverance. Her Majesty is still undecided whether to rebuke or congratulate the Râja when another messenger arrives from the northern highlands.

> "His secret mission told,
> The fragrant scroll is speedily unrolled",

and conveys the glad tidings that the Crown Prince, after heroic efforts, has subjugated one of the most turbulent hill tribes. Dhârini feels less inclined than ever to upbraid the King. The threatening clouds vanish entirely from the domestic horizon when a special embassy bears costly presents from the submissive Râja of Berar for King Agnimitra and his Queen. There is a fine curved sabre, its handsome hilt emblazoned with studs of purest gold, and a superb arrow-case richly inlaid with precious stones. There are flower-embroidered silks and gaudy shawls of Berar make, circlets sparkling with diamonds, and a

couple of cream-coloured donkeys. Two Nagpur bayaderes of exquisite skill and beauty are to divert the ladies of the royal zenana with dance and song. The nautch girls utter a cry of unfeigned surprise as they recognize in Mâlavika one of their lost Princesses. Dhârini is in a forgiving and generous mood because of the military triumphs of her darling son; moreover, she is gratified with the lovely presents. Her gracious consent is not withheld when Agnimitra confers on Mâlavika the title of a Sub-Queen; she is to be the Râja's rightful bride. Mâlavika's strange adventures are the talk of Magadha, and even reach the peaceful convent cell of Sister Kaushiki. She is overjoyed, and hastens to the palace. The curtain falls over the sobs and kisses of the reunited sisters.

. . . .

Kâlidâsa has also written a romantic opera, which would draw crowded houses to Covent Garden if a gifted composer set it to effective music.

The mermaid Urvashi is wedded to King Purûravas. Like a river that bursts its banks in spring, she has trespassed on the grounds of Uma's warrior son. The irate

god transforms the fair offender into a slender vine.[1] The King, frantic with grief, wanders over hill and dale, in search of the beloved nymph. He enquires piteously, even of the dumb creation, whether they have not seen her pass.

> "I will speak to the peacock. O tell
> If—free on the wings as you soar—
> In forest or meadow or dell
> You have seen the loved nymph I adore.
> You will know her, the fairest of damsels fair,
> By her large soft eyes and her graceful air."

But the conceited bird disdains to listen to other people's troubles, and haughtily displays his gorgeous plumage. Purûravas reflects that the boastful creature cannot have seen his love, whose beautiful tresses would have put his painted feathers to shame. He walks on, and comes to a forest lake. Tranquilly a swan glides over the still waters. The elegant movements of the bird arrest the King's attention; the hansa can only have copied them from dainty Urvashi.

[1] The legend, which is located in Kurukshetra, is the subject of a popular sanvâda ballad in the Rig Veda (X, 95). Kâlidâsa's opera and his Shakuntala are based alike on old Indian folklore.

"If thou hadst never seen her graceful form,
Straying along the flower-tufted bank,
Then whence this elegant gait? 't is hers, and thou
Hast stolen it from her in whose every step
Love sports. Thy walk betrays thee. Own thy
theft,
And lead me quickly to her."

But the swan moves on unconcerned, and leaves the royal questioner to his melancholy thoughts. The orchestra plays a tender and pensive air.[1] A swarm of wild bees is buzzing over a tangle of yellow lotuses. The King's reverie is again interrupted, and he soliloquizes:

"How beautiful the lotus! it arrests
My path, and bids me gaze on it. The bees
Murmur against its petals. Like the lips
Of my beloved it glows when they have been
Somewhat too rudely sipped by mine, and sweetly
Protest against such violence."

[1] The swan-motif may well be a poet's reminiscence of the swan-maidens, to whom Vedic romance is no less partial than English and German folklore. Swan-breasted clouds, pregnant with genial showers, sail over the blue summer sky, or, in the language of mythology, lovely swan-maidens, with sunlit eyes and faces rosy-hued, float blithely in the azure lakes of Indra's gay-tinted heaven. Swan-bosomed Urvashi and her seductive sisters gleam with golden ringlets and flowing silvery veils. Like refreshing rain, much needed, the bewitching cloud-sisters descend from heaven to earth, as did the mother of Shakuntala to console her forsaken child. The mountain lakes wherein the lissom apsarases or mermaids bathe and sport were originally not terrestrial waters, but signified celestial phenomena.

The lonesome wanderer turns to one of the silver-winged sailors on the scent-laden breeze:

> "Sweet plunderer of the honeyed dew, hast thou
> Beheld the nymph with large and languid eyes?
> The rippling wave is like her arching brow,
> The fluttering line of storks her timid tongue,
> The foamy spray her white loose-floating vest."
>
> [*Speaking to himself.*
>
> "And yet, methinks, it 's idle to enquire,
> For had he tasted her delicious breath,
> He now would scorn the lotus."

At last the goddess Uma takes pity on the royal sufferings. She places in the Râja's way a ruby stone endowed with the virtue of disenchanting the metamorphosed nymph. Purûravas exclaims:

> "What stream of ruddy radiance breaks
> Through the cleft rock? No flame could have survived
> The fast-descending floods. Is it perhaps
> Some sanguine fragment of a lion's feast?
> No, 't is a gem more roseate than the blush
> Of rhododendron blossoms."

A celestial voice speaks from on high:

> "Take up the gem, my son. Its radiant red
> Adorn thy hand, restore to thee thy bride!"

The distracted lover takes up the magic

stone, and feels irresistibly drawn to a climbing vine.

> "What means this strange emotion as I gaze
> Upon this vine? No blossoms deck her boughs,
> No bees regale her with soft music. Sad
> And silent is the lonely plant, the image
> Of my repentant love. O let me press
> The melancholy likeness to my breast."

The warm touch of affection thrills through every fibre of the trembling creeper, and changes it back to human form. Urvashi lies weeping in the arms of Purûravas. Is there magic more wonderful than the magic of true and tender love?[1]

[1] The poetical quotations are taken from Wilson's translation.—Purûravas resembles the lover in the English folksong:

> "O red rose in the garden,
> O red rose on the spray,
> Saw you my maiden beautiful
> Pass hither on her way?
>
> "Perchance she kissed your petals,
> And turned from white to red
> The rose that blushed to find itself
> With fairer sweets o'erspread."

When the rose withholds an answer, the sentimental youth questions blackbird and nightingale whether they have not seen his lady-love; from her dulcet voice alone they could have caught such sweet and plaintive notes:

> "O blackbird in the thicket,
> And you, sad nightingale,
> Heard you my maiden beautiful
> Go singing down the vale?"

Shakespeare, too, upbraids the forward violets for having stolen sweet fragrance from maiden's breath. and from her veins their purple pride.

8. The Drama in King Harsha's Reign

More people are helped by reading the *Vicar of Wakefield* than the *Origin of Species*. Philosophic truth appeals to the reasoning faculties of a few only, but the contemplation of a good and useful life goes straight to the human heart. The same reflection applies to Indian literature. Even amongst educated Hindus not many will be found who have a clear notion of Sânkhya psychology, but there is hardly a village school throughout the length and breadth of the land where the native children are not familiar with some version of Shakuntala.

The muse of poetry had lavishly bestowed her choicest gifts on Kâlidâsa, and his responsive soul poured forth an abundance of melodious song. Poets and poetasters eagerly cultivated Kâlidâsa's style, but none of their productions has survived. Even the cleverest imitations are mediocre and ephemeral; only original ideas can stand the critical test of time. The first half of the seventh century witnessed a

fresh outburst of dramatic activity among the Hindus, and RATNÂVALI, or THE PEARL NECKLACE, is generally considered the best drama of that period. Bâna, whom most pundits believe to be the author, presided over the republic of letters during King Harsha's reign with the same dignity and distinction as Dr. Johnson did under the Georges.[1]

Ratnâvali, Princess of Ceylon, has suffered shipwreck on a shallow sandbank off the Indian coast. She is happily rescued and taken ashore, without, however, divulging her illustrious lineage. The beautiful and accomplished girl is presently introduced to Queen Vâsavadatta, who engages her for the royal zenana. It is here that King Vatsa meets Ratnâvali, and is won by her seductive charms. Tender words and softer glances are exchanged between the two. The uneasy Queen, in a dry and peremptory tone, commands Ratnâvali to go and fetch her parrot from the aviary.

The next act shows the heroine reposing on a sloping lawn in Vâsavadatta's garden. She holds a blue-necked parrot by a silver

[1] For King Harsha and his reign, see *Short History of Indian Literature*, chapters xii and xvii.

chain, and seems in a pensive mood. After a while, the lady changes her reclining posture and begins sketching with coloured earth. Ratnâvali is so absorbed in her artistic work that she does not notice Susangata, another maid-of-honour, who approaches on tiptoe from behind, and playfully lays her hand over the eyes of her sentimental friend. On seeing King Vatsa's flattered portrait, which is nearly finished, Susangata saucily snatches up the drawing from Ratnâvali's lap, and with a practised hand pencils hastily the fair painter's face by the side of the portrayed King. Ratnâvali is exceedingly annoyed, and wants to recover the painting. During the struggle which ensues, the chain slips off her fingers. The parrot, only too glad to regain sweet liberty, takes wing, and perches on a leafy bough in the adjacent orangery. The two maidens, flushed with excitement, run after the Queen's pet bird, no longer heeding the object of their squabble.

Just then, the Monarch and his jester had a stroll in the gardens, and happened to pass the spot where the unfinished sketch lay exposed on the ground. Vatsa looked

at it earnestly; his fluttering heart told him that Ratnâvali had drawn it, and that she must be in love with him. In the meantime the damsels came back to fetch their things from the garden seat. On hearing men's voices, they hid behind a thick-clustered jasmine bush. The Râja, unaware of their presence, praised Ratnâvali's goodness and beauty in enraptured terms. No sooner had Susangata heard the royal declaration of love than, with an arch twinkle in her roguish eyes, she dragged forth her blushing companion, "whose tulip cheek with deeper crimson glowed". The shrewd maiden then skilfully engaged the talkative jester, who was a zealous botanist, in an engrossing conversation on horticultural topics; he was to tell her all the Sanskrit names of the newly-arrived plants in the shrubbery. The lovers were left alone. They felt embarrassed at first, but soon recovered from their nervousness. It was arranged that Ratnâvali, disguised as Vâsavadatta, should visit the King in the evening.

The concerted plot was ingenious, but the lady-detectives of the jealous Rani were watching and eavesdropping everywhere.

They soon discovered Vatsa's latest intrigue, and confirmed Vâsavadatta's worst fears and suspicions. The perturbed Queen restrained her just anger; she would quietly wait her turn, and entangle the royal fowler in the net which he had cast. She meant to anticipate the new rival in her affections and go herself to Vatsa in the gloaming.

How ardently the Râja welcomed his beautiful spouse, whom he mistook for the little rosebud Ratnâvali! Her disguise was so perfect, he said, that in the dusk his lovely guest looked every inch the real Queen. Vâsavadatta was careful not to dispel the King's illusion, and unmask the traitor, until the measure of his perfidy was full. She kept her face veiled, and refrained from speaking. Vatsa, made eloquent by what seemed to him maidenly bashfulness, repeated more than once how passionately he loved Ratnâvali. "Since your bright star has risen on the horizon of my heart, beloved, even fair Vâsavadatta shines with a fainter light." The Rani trembled with stifled rage, and could hardly control her sorely tried temper, but she would hear the end of it. The King, misinterpreting her tremulous silence for coyness and reserve,

gently drew the sweet face to his breast, and called her all those pretty names which love's folly suggests. That was too much for poor Vâsavadatta; in a paroxysm of grief she tore herself from the arms of her unfaithful lord, sobbing and crying bitterly. However fickle Vatsa was, he loved his consort, and implored her to forgive him. But the insulted wife proudly drew up her queenly form to its full height, and, quickly drying her tears, left the King without a single word either of pardon or reproach. Vatsa felt mortified, and wished that he had never met Ratnâvali. He must have given utterance to the painful thought within hearing of bright-eyed Ratnâvali, who blithely tripped along on her stolen errand of love just then, for with a troubled countenance and a hurried step the maiden withdrew from the royal presence before the King had even noticed her.

Her dejected appearance caused grave anxiety to His Majesty's jester whom she passed. The good-hearted fool, being under the impression that it was the Queen whom he had met, was much concerned about her, and followed at a respectful distance, to be of help if needed. Ratnâvali

hastened through the palace grounds into the open fields. In a fit of despair she threw herself on the ground, muttering incoherent words, and showing signs of mental distraction. The horrified vidûshaka ran back and informed Vatsa that the Rani was about to commit suicide. The repentant Râja rushed out to save the dear life, but what a wild conflict of feelings surged in his agitated breast when he found, instead of the Queen, Ratnâvali bathed in a flood of tears! In her present affliction she looked even lovelier than in her happy mood a few hours since. All his good resolutions melted away before the warmth of his affection as snow before the summer sun, and Vatsa kissed the tears away from the cheeks of his beloved.

Vâsavadatta, too, felt conscience-stricken after the distressing interview with Vatsa. Had she not been too harsh and hasty with her royal mate? This very moment she would go back and make it up with him! On her way to his private apartments she met the vidûshaka, who was delighted to see her safe and hale once more. At the same time, the jester was puzzled at her eager enquiry for the King. Vatsa, then,

had not found her after all? The simple fool wonderingly pointed to the fields where he had witnessed the agony of the pseudo-Queen. Vâsavadatta followed the indicated direction. How she longed for the blissful moment of reconciliation, and for the restoration of domestic happiness! Her love of Vatsa, and her desire to be at peace with him, lent wings to her graceful steps. She came nearer and nearer the fatal spot, until—O horror! she could not believe her eyes—there the false cuckoo held sweet converse with that artful minx! The Queen was infuriated at the unbearable sight. Her dark eyes shot flashes, and her suppressed voice rumbled like distant thunder. Vatsa, indeed, looked thunderstruck; he could neither move nor speak. Ratnâvali had to pay the full penalty; the Rani immediately gave orders to have her detained in custody.

In the interests of the King, the vidûshaka did his utmost to exculpate the poor prisoner, but Vâsavadatta was relentless. In grateful recognition of the jester's good services, Ratnâvali sent him, as a souvenir, her pearl necklace of Ceylonese workmanship; she had saved the dainty gems from

the fatal shipwreck. The flattered recipient proudly showed the beautiful pearls to an ambassador, who had only recently arrived at King Vatsa's Court on a diplomatic errand. The foreign nobleman recognized the necklace with astonishment; long ago he had purchased it himself for his Imperial master, the Mahâ-Râja of Singhala. Princess Ratnâvali, he added mournfully, could not have worn the lovely ornament very long, for the poor girl was drowned at sea. The politic Rani, on learning that her captive was a daughter of the powerful Emperor of Ceylon, changed her tactics at once. Not only did Vâsavadatta release the fair prisoner, but she paid her marked attention and such respect as befitted the lofty station of Ratnâvali. The Queen carried her ambitious policy even so far as to offer the Princess a joint-partnership in her conjugal affections.

. . . .

King Vatsa's gay amours seem to have been a favourite theme of Indian fiction during the seventh century; not unlike the more tragic love affairs of Mary Stuart, whose misfortunes furnished material to men of letters a century ago, when Scott

composed the *Abbot*, one of his finest romances, and Schiller presented the lovely Queen of Scots to the German stage.

PRIYADARSHIKA deals with the same subject as Ratnâvali, and was probably written by one of King Harsha's courtiers.

The girlish voice of Priyadarshika is heard behind the scene. When the curtain rises, she is busy picking flowers for Vâsavadatta's supper table. The bees are buzzing over the delicate tea roses and the fragrant orange blossoms, and one stray wanderer whirs about the maiden's unveiled face. She screams out, and to King Vatsa, who is near,

> "Her face discloses Paradise to view,
> Eyes like a fawn's, and cheeks of rosy hue"

To see and love beauty is one and the same with the impressionable Râja. He chases his troublesome rival away, and sips himself the honey off the maiden's lips, and gently enforces her sweet confession that one day his fondness may be requited.

A learned lady of the Queen's bedchamber has written a drawing-room play entitled "The Love Story of Vatsa and Vâsavadatta". The performance is to

take place in the zenana. The Rani's part will be acted by Priyadarshika, the Râja's by Lady Manorama, who is let into the secret of the King's intrigue with her fellow actress. It has been arranged that Manorama, in the last moment, is to send word of her sudden indisposition and utter inability to perform that day. Vâsavadatta feels annoyed that her plans are crossed, but King Vatsa consoles her, and generously offers to take the absentee's part himself. Laughingly he remarks: "For once I shall act on the stage what I am always acting in life." The proposal is agreed to, and the theatricals commence. Nature and grace impart their very best to Priyadarshika's acting, and as to Vatsa, he enters into the spirit of the love scenes with undisguised zeal. The authoress, who sits next to Vâsavadatta, is delighted that her comedietta should have found such excellent interpreters. But the Queen is restless at the very thought that Vatsa might carry on a flirtation with Priyadarshika, under the player's mask and licence. And now the king-actor lifts up the lily face of the stage-queen, and imprints kiss after kiss on her sweet lips and eyes, and

the torrents of love passion rush in musical Sanskrit cadence out of the secret chambers of his heart. The spectators feel transported, and encore enthusiastically. Everyone in the distinguished audience is in raptures except Vâsavadatta. She hardly hears the eulogies of the spectacled bluestocking by her side, who emphatically declares that never in her life has she witnessed such fine stage-acting. The jealous Queen rises impulsively, feigning a bad headache, and the need of fresh air. An open gallery surrounds in a semicircle the play-room, and is cosily furnished with small marble tables and wicker chairs. Palms and statuettes decorate the entrance side, and the front overlooks the royal gardens, which gradually lose themselves in the distant uplands. Her Majesty enters the gallery; she must rest a while and calm her excited nerves. There is a snug corner with a comfortable couch where nobody will disturb her. But the seat is already occupied. The vidûshaka, who has partaken somewhat freely of the pleasures of the table, lies on the couch with outstretched limbs, and snores peacefully. Vâsavadatta, only too glad to vent

her ruffled temper, shakes the jester rudely; he is sure to know when Vatsa is breeding mischief. The poor fool rubs his drowsy eyes in wonderment. The Queen questions him sharply, and Vatsa's confidant, still half asleep, babbles out the whole truth, quite unconscious of the harm he is doing his royal master.[1]

Vâsavadatta returns at once and stops the progress of the play. Priyadarshika is confined to her room by the incensed Queen, and Manorama gets a severe reproof. The ending of the play is similar to that of Ratnâvali.

9. The Buddhist Theatre

In ancient India it was customary for ruling Princes, together with their ladies and the Court, to set out, at appointed seasons, for a place of sacrifice up in the vanaprastha. The royal party proceeded to a hallowed wood, at the foot of the Snowy Mountains where the golden soma grew.[2] During the toilsome journey the

[1] As a rule, it is the Court fool's function, by his slashing wit, to help his friends out of a scrape rather than lead them into trouble.

[2] The intoxicating soma juice, to which the Indo-Iranians

Court chaplain (purohita) and his priestly staff edified the distinguished pilgrims with deva lore and the "old, old story" (purâna) of the beginning of things, and of the cosmic order. But the boisterous train of followers required coarser food, and their full allowance of fun and licence was but rarely cut short. Gleemen, in grotesque attire, their beards and faces dyed, with rattles, bells, and tambourines, danced or rather skipped along like a savage herd of giddy goats. Indeed, the hairy ajin or goatskin and the wild boar's head, emblem of a prolific stock, were quite a favourite disguise. Tokens of the fierce panther and dread lion, the kingly beasts of Shiva, and bushy tails aping the sportive monkey, added to the wanton masquerade. The revellers seemed to stroll home from a rout or riot rather than to partake in a solemn and religious act. The soul's realities and the world's

were no less partial than Europeans are to the seductive grape juice, was largely used for libations. That most potent of all charms became the soul and centre of the Vedic sacrifice. Burns has extolled John Barleycorn in song, and the ninth mandala of the Rig Veda is entirely devoted to the preparation and exaltation of King Soma. To the Âryas who quaffed the foaming soma cup, the spirit seemed divine,—adorable even above thundering Indra and blazing Agni (IX, 96[5]).

mummery, Brahma and mâya, throughout life go hand in hand. Every grade of society, from the gravest to the gayest, and from the loftiest to the grossest, was represented in the yâtra or procession. Gallant soldiers on whose manly brows honour and loyalty had stamped their mark, and beaming clerics, with a rich vein of humour, who chuckled over a good anecdote, or puzzled over Vedic riddles;[1]

[1] The riddles of the Rig Veda (I, 164; VIII, 29) as well as of the kindred Edda are fragrant with the maiden bloom of nature's poetry. "Who feeds on ashes, sleeps on stones, is fatherless and motherless?" asks the "Old Grannie", and the sagaman answers:

> "Fire feeds on ashes,
> Is hid on the hearthstone,
> Fire springs from flint."

The wolf-limbed Viking who has led the way through the primeval wilderness, and spanned many a broad forest stream with a floating bridge of rude oak rafts, sits in the Chieftain's timbered hall amid his boon companions, and shouts joyfully over the brimming mead cup:

> "Pathway above us,
> Pathway below us,
> We went along!"

And the knowing clansmen take up the catch, and in another snatch of song respond:

> "Birds flew above us,
> Fish swam below us,
> We were crossing the bridge."

Aryan paganism teems with nature riddles which are intimately bound up with natural religion. Brahmodya, which means "Brahma topic", is the Sanskrit word for riddle. It is a topic which children and youthful races love,—their first crude guess at cosmic problems.

spirited cavaliers delighting in a passage of arms, and peaceful scholars enjoying a quiet game of chess better than joust or kriegs-spiel;[1] the blue blood of the proud beauties in the chivalrous zenana, and the light-o'-love damsels of the retainers' less ceremonious tents; the motley crowd of pedlars and jugglers, medicine-men and exorcists: they all came to pay homage to the gorgeous pantheon of the eye-feasting tropics. And

[1] A complete Indian army consisted of foot and horse (= pawns and knights), archers mounted on elephants, and warriors standing in raths or chariots. This four-limbed (chatur-anga) host, lined round the Râj and his military adviser, the Commander-in-chief, gave rise to the game of chatrang, which is the Indian name of chess. Like beast-fables and fairy-tales, the royal pastime came to Europe by way of islamized Persia, where King and Counsellor were renamed Shah and Vizir. The Shah's men have become our chess-men, whom the oldest Gaelic tales mention as constant companions of Irish and Highland chiefs. Christianity raised the pagan bowmen to the rank of bishops. The Vizir had to make room for the Virgin, Heaven's "Queen", to whom all roads are open. The rook is a survival of the rath, which Oriental fancy fused with the roc or simurgh,—a fabulous bird of gigantic size, able to seize elephants, and take them across the sea to the griffin's nest. Rath itself is connected with our word *ride*. The rook is also called castle, because the howdah on the tusker's back is like a movable tower that guards the tenant's exposed position. Nuptial and burial rites often preserve, at least symbolically, quaint customs of a ruder age. Similarly, the chessboard with kings, knights, archers, chariots, and elephants, recalls the chequered scenes of Vedic and epic warfare. In the south of London, not far from the famous inn whence the Canterbury pilgrims started, there is another tavern, the "Elephant and Castle", where chess-players used to assemble.

as the pilgrims ascended from the stifling jungle to the bracing heights, they drank wassail in soma to the azure peaks of towering Himalay lost in the watery blue. And as the panorama expanded, the awed vision of the worshippers reflected, as in the mirror of poesy, the ever-widening zone that like a coiling serpent crept round the giant waist of blue-necked Mahâdev, the mighty mountain-god whose feet are laved by Ganga. The sacrifice itself was most elaborate, and often extended over months or years. Every now and then light interludes of joyous minstrelsy relieved the monotony of weary rites and endless chants. White-locked rhapsodists, sprung from noble loins, stood up amidst their warrior kin, and the bards' melodious lips poured forth, in rhythmic cadence, the glowing panegyric of valiant sires who had earned deathless glory in the "Great Fight" (Mahâ-Bhârata) of yore. Three generations after the Battle of Kurukshetra, the Râja of Hastinapur, resolving to extirpate the serpent kind, instituted a Snake Sacrifice during which the thrilling incidents of the ancestral theatre of war were narrated or perhaps enacted.

Again, in a later age, another illustrious sagaman took up each silvery thread of the bright Kuru legend, and spun out the fine gossamer of floating song, canto after canto, into that thousand-coloured texture, known as the Mahâ-Bhârata, before the wondering sacrificers who were assembled in Naimisha Forest.

Pâli, which was even more than Sanskrit the language of romance and minstrelsy, originated in Oudh, the native land of Râma, where akkhânas, that is, tales of the gods and national heroes, were publicly recited on festive occasions. These old Pâli ballads had prose and verse intermixed, and were highly dramatic. They were actually performed (as a kind of intermezzo between the sacrificial acts) at the religious gatherings of the clans, in a sacred grove by a clear stream, or on the breezy hilltop, first kissed by the rising sun,—in the very presence of the pure elements as it were. Buddhist literature, which has preserved such akkhânas, nay, the early Indian theatre itself, flourished in Koshala (Oudh), where vîna-players, "drunk with the mead of poetry",[1] had made music,

[1] Kâveyya-matta.

ever since the days of the Aryan settlement, to the stirring folksongs which Vâlmîki afterwards wove into the Râmâyana epic.

. . . .

Strict Methodists regard it as a sin to enter ballrooms and playhouses; and the heretical sects of India, more particularly the Jains and Buddhists, likewise stood up against ballets and stage plays as tending to demoralize human nature.[1] The canonical Suttas actually forbid the faithful to attend concerts or theatricals; but Buddhism, however strict in theory, was accommodating in practice, and even made use

[1] Both sects disregard the authority of the Veda, and have separated from the Brahminic community,—the Buddhists in the fifth century B.C., and the Jains even earlier. Numbers of Jains are settled in Bombay, where they occupy influential positions as merchants and bankers. The Quakers are held in high esteem because of their upright conduct, clean living, and ungrudging charity. It is by the same excellent qualities that the Jains commend themselves to their fellow countrymen. Their very name means "victorious, triumphant" over whatever is unrighteous and unclean. They are keen business men, extremely shrewd and cautious, and thus bear further resemblance to the Society of Friends. Very remarkable is the extravagant kindness shown by the Jains to animals. They are strict vegetarians, even abstaining from the use of eggs and of unfiltered water, for fear of destroying any germ of nascent life. Some even go so far as to take precautionary measures in breathing, since the air teems with invisible life quite as much as earth and water. Other Jains brush the ground carefully before sitting down, lest they might tread on some insect inadvertently.

of the theatre for religious propaganda. Dance and song have always been prominent features at Buddhist festivals, both sacred and profane. The fine sculpture in the Ajanta caves, with its gay and wanton scenes, bears out that fact. There is a legend of a Singhalese actress whose life was so saintly that the Holy Sangha or Synod canonized her. Dramatic spectacles in honour of the Buddha were frequently performed in Indian monasteries during the Middle Ages, and mystery plays are still given twice a year in the religious houses of Tibet. Theological controversy is mixed up with gross and farcical passages; the monks are masked as good angels, while the unclean spirits are acted by laymen.

The dramatic literature of Indian Buddhism increased fast during the centuries that intervene between the reigns of Ashoka and Harsha, but, strange to say, out of this mass of plays nothing has been preserved, apart from fragments recently discovered, save the NÂGÂNANDA or "Rejoicing of the Snakes". More than one reason can be adduced for this wholesale destruction of the Buddhist theatre. The

scriptural command to keep away from playhouses implied an injunction on every good Buddhist to suppress, or at least to ignore, the drama. Moreover, the brahmins did their utmost to stunt the dangerous growth of heretic literature. And in the third place, Buddhism claimed to be the People's Religion, and naturally preferred the vulgar tongue to aristocratic Sanskrit both in the pulpit and on the stage. Its sacred books, authorized to be read in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, are composed in Pâli, and even the later Sanskrit texts of the Indian Buddhists contain old metrical portions in a mixed dialect. The early Prâkrit theatre to which we have alluded in the second chapter must have largely consisted of Buddhist plays. King Harsha, who had a taste for letters, knew perfectly well that vernacular writings like the Jâtaka tales,[1] however popular and excellent, cannot possibly have so large a circulation as national literature. So he wisely encouraged the literary men in his capital to write Buddhist dramas in Sanskrit. Most

[1] Or, to take a more familiar example, the poetry which Burns composed in the Lowland tongue.

pieces proved worthless, and altogether unfit to survive the season of their birth. But one talented Court poet composed the Nâgânanda, which pleased the gifted Râja so much that he set the play to music himself. Such at least is the account given by I-Tsing, a learned friar from the Far East, who saw the Nâgânanda performed at Kanouj, twelve hundred years ago.

Nâgas or snakes are venerated in India as types of worldly prudence. The celestial bird Garuda, possibly a symbol of Divine Wisdom, is fabled to have entered a pact which entitled him to one nâga for his daily food. Garuda is represented as sitting on the right hand of Vishnu, and the whole myth was perhaps intended for a moral lesson to teach the people that self-sacrifice is acceptable in the sight of God.[1]

Prince Jîmûta, the hero of the Nâgânanda, once passed a mount of snake bones, the melancholy remains of Garuda's

[1] The fabulous bird recurs in many a Buddhist legend. A Javanese inscription of the sixth century A.D. likens the soaring flight of wisdom to Garuda's huge wings, which spread to the four quarters of the sky. Indian Buddhism was introduced at an early age in Java, whence it migrated, in a corrupt form, to the Malay Archipelago.

meals. Jîmûta felt moved to compassion, and wished to give up his body so that the poor nâga might be saved to whose pitiful lot it had fallen to be devoured that day. Garuda accepted the proffered substitute, and carried Jîmûta high up on a mountain. The flight was so rapid that a jewel dropped out of the Prince's crown, and fell upon the bronze-tinted crest of the redeemed nâga. To this day Indian snake idols display a jewel amid the clouded silver of their heads.

The Deity, well pleased with the offering, descended in a shower of amrita, which revived Jîmûta and all the nâgas that Garuda had consumed. And there was great rejoicing among the snakes over the resurrection of their dead.[1]

[1] Some of the Dasyus or Indian aborigines were known as Nâgas, because they dwelt in mountain caves, in the bowels of the earth, according to the Mahâ-Bhârata. Nâga tribes inhabited the highland home of King Nala, as well as the district of Nagpur, whence Princess Mâlavika took flight before the Vidarbha host. Like all primitive races, the Nâgas were fond of showy headgear and of glittering stones. Indra appears in the Rig Veda as a giant-killer and dragon-slayer; the doughty hero-god crushed the foul brood of nâgas. His feats of strength reflect the hunger for land and cattle which characterized the early Hindu invaders of the Punjab. They gradually conquered and absorbed the black-skinned natives, some of whom even contracted marriages with their Aryan rulers.

Hindu critics consider the Nâgânanda as a masterpiece of exposition, and the drama takes a high rank in Sanskrit literature.[2] The poet, in true Shakespearean fashion, has relieved the pathos of the play by some ludicrous incidents.

Shekhar is tipsy on leaving Jîmûta's

Thus, one of Arjun's wives was a Nâga Princess. The inevitable result of Aryan intermixture with coloured women were the many bastard castes which have pestered India ever since the Vedic age. Most despised of all were the degraded chandâlas, who had to make a living as butchers, grave-diggers, or executioners, being excluded from all other trades.

Garuda is akin to garut (=wing), and originally meant no more than "winged", until the magic of Aryan speech associated the word with the flame-winged lightning. During a thunderstorm, the people would say: "Now garuda cleaves jîmûta" (= the stormcloud). The deadly flashes that shoot like fiery serpents across the sky seem to consume themselves. Hence the myth arose that Garuda devours the nâgas. He came to be regarded as the archetype of the nâga-destroying or worm-eating species. Vedic sagamen depict Garuda as a huge celestial bird with gorgeous plumage, the golden-crested king of the feathered creation. And what means Jîmûta's jewelled crown but lofty cloud-rifts, sun-gilt and silver-lined? What *amrita*, food of *immortals*, but ambrosial showers, reviving and restoring the parched earth as the dread storm passes?

No doubt, the ultimate source of the Nâgânanda are historical facts interwoven with the bright fancies of Aryan nature poetry.

[2] However, the lustre which the Sanskrit drama has shed over Buddhist poetry is outshone by Pâli lyrics. Neumann's *Lieder der Mönche und Nonnen* is a spirited German rendering of a collection of fine Buddhist canticles. Some of these ecstatic outbursts of monastic song are not unworthy to take a place by the side of the mystical rhapsodies of Christian saints.

10. Bhavabhûti

Bhavabhûti was the leading dramatist of India during the second half of the seventh century. Like Schiller he was a born idealist, his soul aglow with profound ideas of freedom and immortality. Kâlidâsa and Goethe, on the other hand, were keen observers of individual life, lovers of human nature in all its details and ramifications. It was no mere accident which led Schiller to the study of history and philosophy, Goethe to mineralogy and sculpture. Kâlidâsa was no less a realist; his poetry mirrors mankind as he saw it, and not as he wished to see it. But Bhavabhûti was a lofty moralist; his genius was logical, restless, romantic, and he was eager to leave the world better than he had found it. His father was an ecclesiastic in Berar. When the son reached early manhood, he attached himself to the then brilliant Court of Kanouj. About A.D. 700, a Kashmir army occupied Kanouj, and the victorious troops carried the prisoners of war, among them the young poet, back to their glorious Alpine home. Bhavabhûti died in Kashmir full

of years and honour. His grateful countrymen have never ceased to venerate the sweet-voiced (shri-kantha) poet.[1]

Wallenstein, Schiller's ripest creation, is a leaf taken from the pages of German history, and the UTTARA RÂMA CHARITA, Bhavabhûti's finest drama, likewise deals with a national subject. Both plays are preceded by introductory pieces: *Wallenstein's Lager*, in this respect, corresponds to the MAHÂ-VÎRA CHARITA, which treats of Râma's courtship and married life previous to the Conquest of Lanka, while the UTTARA RÂMA CHARITA relates events subsequent to the hero's return from Ceylon to Koshala-land.[2]

[1] The Romans celebrated the harvest festival in honour of Ceres, goddess of plenty. Her Indian name is Shri, who abounds in swelling corn and ripe fruit, the sweets of Mother Earth. Shri, as a title of distinction, is bestowed on saints, because of the fullness and maturity of their spiritual experience, as well as on poets whose ripe genius and sweet eloquence entitle them to homage and reverence. The giant-killer of Koshala, far gentler than blustering Indra, is known as Shri Râma, and Bhavabhûti as Shri-Kantha. One of the snow-clad peaks near the sources of the Ganges, where Shiva's meditation was undisturbed save by the sweet wild music of the gurgling stream, is also named Shrikantha.

[2] In the field of romance, Scott's *Monastery* may be compared, though less appropriately, to the Mahâ-Vîra, and *The Abbot* to the Uttara Râma Charita. The last word means course, occurrence, history; vîra signifies virile, manly, heroic. Mahâ-Vîra Charita is the Story of the Mighty Hero, i.e. of

To give a full summary of the two plays would mean going over much of the old ground again which we have already traversed. For the sake of completeness, however, we will take up the thread of Bhavabhûti's narrative where we dropped it in telling the story of the Râmâyana.[3]

Slander was rife in the city of Ayodhya about Râvana and Sîta. King Râma, being more sensitive to public praise or censure than to domestic happiness, decided to banish his faithful wife, although he did so with a bleeding heart. In the wilds of Dandaka Forest, poor Sîta gave birth to Kusha and Lava, Râma's rightful sons. The twins were brought up by Shri Vâlmîki, the cunning saga-smith who, out of rude folklore, fashioned the wondrous Râmâyana epic.

The feudal barons of medieval France

Shri Râma, whose further (utter) history is told in the Uttara Râma Charita. The Harsha Charita is a famous chronicle of King Harsha's reign.

Charita and charya are Sanskrit participles, both akin to the Latin "current". Brahmacharya, that is to say, the theological course or curriculum of a young brahmin, prior to his settling down as a householder and husband, came to mean chastity, which was enjoined on all students of divinity in ancient India. They were to "walk (char) with Brahma" and lead a godly life.

[3] *Short History of Indian Literature*, chapter vi.

swore allegiance on the succession of a new sovereign, who reinstated them as lieutenants of the Crown lands which they held. The Frankish kings rode round the land in state, accepting homage and bestowing fiefs. They used to mount a milk-white foal of the purest breed; its shining mane was carefully groomed, and adorned with sparkling jewels. Lucky was the man who secured a single hair out of the sacred mane; he would treasure it as a relic, or wear it as a charm against misfortune. Similar customs prevailed in ancient India, where vassal-kings took an oath of fealty to the Mahâ-Râja or Liege-Lord. At the coronation festival, or on other solemn occasions, a young steed (ashwa) was let loose, and a military escort followed wherever the ashwa roamed. The tract of land thus covered was once more declared to be subject to the Sovereign's jurisdiction. Within the royal demesnes, nobody was to touch the horse, or else he ran the risk of being treated as a rebel. The elaborate ceremony was called ASHWAMEDHA, because the sacrifice of the horse terminated the proceedings.[1]

Medha means sacrifice.

Râma performed an Ashwamedha, and the noble steed, being left to itself, came to Vâlmîki's hermitage. The equerries loudly proclaimed the Mahâ-Râja's suzerainty; but young Lava, resenting obeisance when it was enforced, defied the royal command, and stopped the consecrated horse, not knowing that he laid himself open to a double charge, inasmuch as he opposed paternal authority as well as the Imperial pleasure. The commander of the troop challenged the youthful offender. Lava was quite ready to break a lance with him, nay, courted the opportunity of gaining his first military laurels. Suddenly the cry arose: "Make room for the Samrâj! room for our gracious Sovereign-Lord!" It was Râma himself, clad in a tiger's skin, who entered the scene of combat, and speedily separated the gallant opponents. The Mahâ-Râja was downcast and melancholy ever since he had deserted Queen Sîta. And now he came to revisit the cherished places in the forest where he had spent his happiest years in her company.

Prince Lava, struck with admiration for the noble-looking Monarch, frankly offered

apology and homage. Râma, too, felt drawn to the spirited, yet gentle youth. Kusha, who had arrived in the meantime, looked the very image of his sire, but neither knew the other. The boy had been on a visit to the sage Bharata, whose dramatic version of the Râmâyana was to be performed at Vâlmîki's âshram. The twins were to act Râma and Sîta.[1]

Bharata's play dwelt on the sufferings of Sîta. She attempts to end her miseries by drowning herself in the Ganges. But Ganga pities and rescues her; the river goddess appears with a new-born babe on each arm.

Râma was so overcome with sad reminiscences which the play awakened in his breast that he swooned. The real Sîta then came forward. The tender and anxious care which she bestowed on her husband soon brought him back to consciousness, and those were blissful moments when the loving parents and their boys were reunited and locked in a fond

[1] Indian actors (bhâratas) revere Bharata as their patron saint. He is an imaginary person, whose name expresses the ancient ideals of the native stage, even as Manu is symbolic of man's worth and aspirations, or, to come nearer home, Britannia of Britain's Imperial mission.

embrace. The happy family returned to Ayodhya, where the repentant populace gave Sîta an enthusiastic welcome.

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The Brihat Katha is a celebrated collection of old Prâkrit stories, to which the Hindus of the seventh century listened as eagerly as the Italians of the fourteenth to Boccaccio's novelettes.[1] The ocean of folklore embedded in the Brihat Katha fed the imagination of King Harsha's Court, and afforded entertainment, in an earlier age, to Kâlidâsa's contemporaries, who appreciated his magnificent setting of Shakuntala and Urvashi so keenly. But the popularity of the bright Prâkrit fables was by no means confined to India. They diffused themselves through many a literary channel in a variety of tongues, and still divert, in some recast or other, if not the drawing-rooms, at least the nurseries of Europe. The tales (akkhânas) of national heroes, narrated in the epics, and Prâkrit romance supplied Indian play-

[1] Brihat Katha means Great Narrative or Big Story-Book. The final *t* in brihat as well as bhagavat (divine) is softened before sonant letters; hence, the Sanskrit names for the Great Jungle Upanishad and the Divine Lay (India's two best religious books) are Brihad Âranyaka and Bhagavad Gîta.

wrights with ample material; Shakespeare, too, drew largely from English history and Italian fiction. VATSA'S AMOURS suggested the plot of Ratnâvali and Priyadarshika. Another favourite love story in the Katha collection bears the title MÂLATI AND MÂDHAVA, and was turned by Bhavabhûti into an original drama. The playgoers of Kanouj liked the piece so much that Uddandi, a later dramatist, changed all the names, and modernized the play. But his composition is like a Monday hash made up of the remnants of the last Sunday dinner. We will briefly examine the dramatic plot of Bhavabhûti's delightful production.

Lady Mâlati is to marry old Nandan, but although her reluctant hand is disposed of, her willing heart is secretly given to young Mâdhava. The handsome youth pursues his studies under the tuition of Kâmandaki, a learned priestess who encourages the lovers.

Mâlati and Mâdhava take a walk in the cloister gardens, and pass Nandan's sister on an ambulance. A tiger has attacked her, but Makrand, one of Mâdhava's fellow students, has killed the beast and

saved the girl. She plighted her troth to the brave deliverer, who promised to be true to his betrothed.

Mádhava is in despair, and offers fervent prayer in Kâli's temple that the goddess may graciously avert the hapless union between Mâlati and Nandan. The black magician who officiates at the blood-stained shrine chants weird Tantrist and Atharva spells, preparatory to the gruesome slaughter of a virgin on the sacrificial altar. Mâdhava hears distinctly the piteous cries of the secreted victim. Surely he knows that voice, and rushes to her rescue. It is Mâlati, whom he snatches from the bloodthirsty clutches of the mad fanatic.

Kâmandaki bids the lovers take courage when the dread marriage morning dawns. She will steer them safely through every difficulty. Indeed, prudence and daring are wonderfully blended in the fine character of Kâmandaki. At her suggestion, Nandan's young bride is to be attired in festive garb at the very convent over which the shrewd priestess presides. She then arranges a secret meeting between Mâlati and Mâdhava in the dormitory, and marries

them according to Buddhist rites. The young pair leave unobserved, and in order that they may gain time, Makrand dons Mâlati's wedding gown.

The disguised student is taken in solemn procession to Nandan's house, where he goes through the prescribed marriage ceremony. At last the supreme moment comes when the eager bridegroom is left alone with his young wife. As with a trembling hand he raises the nuptial veil, Nandan receives a kick so violent that his limbs ache and his eyes water. The startled courtier, groaning and sighing, hobbles out of the room, and his pretty sister has to listen to a mournful tale. She volunteers to mediate and speak to her unmannerly and rather masculine sister-in-law. On entering the bridal chamber, she finds herself in the virile arms of her fond lover. After a hurried explanation, Makrand elopes with his lady fair. The two join Mâlati and Mâdhava in their place of retreat.

The romantic flight of the runaway couples being discovered, Nandan, with the King's sanction, has a patrol of soldiers sent after the fugitives. Makrand and Mâdhava repulse the pursuers and come

victorious out of the skirmish. Their spirited and successful resistance secure them the royal favour, and a double wedding feast is celebrated with great pomp, and is honoured by the Râja's presence, poor old Nandan acting as best man to Makrand.[1]

11. The National Drama

In the age of silver, Vishnu came down from heaven for the sixth time to lead suffering humanity once more from sin and error unto salvation. At that time, the orthodox brahmins were in danger of being superseded by the rationalistic warrior caste. In order to suppress heresy and scepticism, Vishnu became incarnate as Parashu-Râma or "Râma with the Axe", who is altogether a different personality from Râma, the saintly King of Oudh. Thrice seven times Râma with the Axe subdued the kshatriyas, and made the priestly caste the paramount power in India. Native art represents the avatâr as a giant of colossal size and strength

[1] Makrand is short for Makaranda. Nandan must neither be confounded with Nanda, the foster-father of Krishna, nor with Ânanda, one of Buddha's disciples. Mâdhava, too, has to be kept distinct from his namesake, the Râja of Nagpur (in Kâlidâsa's play).

wielding a mighty battleaxe.[1] One day he walked along the cliffs of the Malabar coast, when the ocean-god growled at him and tried to impede his progress. Parashu-Râma then struck his axe deep in the solid rock. Wide clefts and inlets were formed by the force of the blow, and Father Ocean rushed into the trap, foaming and howling, while the avatâr pursued his way quietly.

Another legend accounts differently for the creeks and firths which indent the rocky coast of South-western India. Hanuman, commander-in-chief of the vânar (monkey) army, whose fights with the demons of Ceylon are narrated in the Râmâyana, was endowed with literary as well as military skill. He turned Vâlmîki's epic into a national play, and scratched the soft Sanskrit verses which he had composed into the hard sandstone of the Western Ghats. Vâlmîki felt uneasy lest the excellence of the new drama might injure the well-established fame of the heroic poem. The good-natured monkey-general then tore the

[1] The pelican, a water bird, whose beak is somewhat shaped like a pickaxe, is named after the Greek word peleku, which both in sound and meaning agrees with the Sanskrit parashu (axe). Avatâr signifies descent, a visible incarnation of the Deity.

impress off the huge mountain crags, and cast it in the sea. Part of the rock-typed script was accidentally recovered by some Indian sailors in the eleventh century, when Bhoja was king. The cultured Râja entrusted Dâmodar, his poet-laureate, with the arduous task of joining and recasting the bulky fragments for the Malva stage. Though being an abridgment, Dâmodar's play sadly lacks brevity. Its fourteen acts possess antiquarian interest rather than literary value.[1]

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Bhatta Nârâyan, who lived a hundred

[1] In the age of the Râmâyana, fierce tribes of aborigines roamed through the Dekhan woodlands. It was a common sight for Aryan settlers from the north to see the wild men of the wood suddenly burst from the mountain caves in which they slept, and quench their thirst at a river's brink, or climb the majestic vanaspatis, i.e. jungle-lords, to pick the edible fruit off the laden branches. Hence the jungle-roving bands of savage monkeys and uncouth natives were both called vânars or foresters; the word is derived from vana (forest).

Hanumat, or Hanuman as he is generally styled in Europe, is one of the most popular figures in Eastern folklore. There is a Malay tradition that the venturous leader of the vânar host, after the Conquest of Lanka (Ceylon), dwelled in Java,

> "Living on fruit and nuts, and dressed
> In coat of bark and deerskin vest",

the customary garb of Indian ascetics. Even now the Javanese make regular pilgrimages to the vanaprastha where the voluntary exile is believed to have done penance, in order that he might gain heaven.

years after Bhavabhûti, made Draupadi the heroine of a national drama. After the fatal game of dice,[1] the Kaurava brothers looked upon Draupadi as their rightful property. When she objected to be treated as a slave, one of them dragged the Princess by her beautiful thick hair across the spacious banquet hall. Bhîma, trembling with rage, re-bound her dishevelled tresses, and swore to avenge the disgrace. Many years after, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, he made good the oath, and slew his insolent cousin.

Bhatta Nârâyan has drawn the various characters of the Mahâ-Bhârata very graphically. Vindictive Bhîma and imperious Karna stand out in bold contrast to well-balanced Arjun. Duryodhan, in his own estimation, shows much foresight and dignity, although, in reality, he is pig-headed and overbearing. Yudhishthir acts like a true gentleman: courteous, gallant, true to his word, and ever ready to sacrifice his private interests to the common good.

But the fierce Mahâ-Bhârata was, at no time, so popular on the Indian stage as the gentler sister-epic. The Hindus never

[1] *Short History of Indian Literature*, chapter iv.

seem to tire of a story told of the saintly Râma. The Nepalese theatre in the north is known to have produced Râma plays as early as the fourteenth century of our era. The Tamil theatre in the south has shown itself no less partial to the Râmâyana.[1] The dramatic literature of India does not stand alone in the tendency to revert to national subjects. The theme of many a Greek tragedy is taken from the *Iliad*, and various German poets have composed Nibelung plays. *Cid Campeador* has found favour on the Spanish stage, and *King Arthur* was received with enthusiasm by large London audiences. Hosts of Indian dramas are derived from the Râmâyana. Some of them lay the scene in the royal palace at Mithila, others outside the city gates of Lanka, others again in the glades of Dandaka Forest. One author introduces a house party of Shakuntala's father, a power-

[1] Nepalese belongs to the Sanskrit stock of languages; musical Tamil is a Dravidian or Indo-Turanian tongue. Chinese and Tamil are the only Turanian languages that have produced dramas of any value.

The Javanese, too, have fondly preserved the memory of Râma, but they are more attached to the heroes of the "Great Epic". The Mahâ-Bhârata, which is extant in a Kavi version, lingers on in many legends and place names throughout the Isle of Java.

ful rishi who is about to perform an elaborate sacrifice in his forest bungalow. Among Vishwâmitra's invited guests are King Janaka and his daughter Sîta, the sage Gautama and his wife Ahalya, Prince Râma and his brother Lakshman. Râma and Sîta meet for the first time. Indra is also present, but the god has rendered himself invisible because he feels ashamed of being seen committing adultery with the beautiful Ahalya. But Gautama, by virtue of his holiness, detects the hideous crime, and is so incensed at the foul deed that he transforms his wife into a dangerous cliff, as a warning to others that she cannot be trusted.

By far the most spirited Râma play is a comedy of errors written by Râmabhadra. The poet, who resided in the Dekhan, was a contemporary of the author of *Tartuffe*. Sîta's swayamvara[1] gives rise to some scenes of exquisite humour. Her suitors try to bend an unwieldy bow, Râma alone succeeds. Parashu-Râma is one of the unsuccessful rivals. Regarding every kshatriya as a born enemy of the human race,

[1] The ceremony of choosing a husband is described in the *Short History of Indian Literature*, chapter iv.

the avatâr challenges Râma to single combat, but is defeated and, at the same time, reconciled to the generous victor. A far more dangerous opponent than bluff and honest Parashu-Râma is the treacherous Râvana. Spiteful because Sîta has rejected his suit, and hating Râma because she has accepted him, the Râkshasa King requests the conquered hero to lend him his parashu or battleaxe, so that he might slay the troublesome Kshatriya Prince. When the petition is scornfully declined, Râvana secures his sister's co-operation. The Râkshasa Princess metamorphoses herself into Sîta's likeness, and is to stab the Koshala Prince with a poisoned dagger. Râvana's butler is disguised as Râma, and has orders to lure Sîta away from her friends. Princess and butler travel by different routes, but happen to arrive at their destination simultaneously. They are got up so excellently that they mistake each other for Râma and Sîta, and are caught in their own trap. The real objects of their evil design, unnoticed by the deceived deceivers, are not far off, and feel somewhat alarmed when they behold their exact counterfeits. The two pretenders, evasive and inquisitive

alike, become so enamoured of one another, as they carry out the diplomatic part of their errand, that they forget all about murder and abduction. Intoxicated with tender glances and fervent kisses, both messengers break faith to the demon-king, and, taking each other into their confidence, disclose every detail of their criminal intention. Only slowly the humiliating truth dawns on the clumsy pair of rogues: they are dealing with the wrong party, and have made fools of themselves! After reconsidering their position, the impostors decide to do Râvana's commission after all. But Râma has heard quite enough of the unclean colloquy to be convinced of their guilt. He kills the butler and wounds the Princess. She takes flight to Ceylon. Her brother is furious that she has been duped, and devises another plot.

In the next act, Râma is seen hunting in a well-stocked wood, when Sîta's image is suddenly conjured up before his enchanted vision. It is a trick due to Râvana's jugglery. The loving husband points out the luring image to his Court jester, who cannot see the mirage, and rightly suspects black râkshasa magic. Two Lanka emis-

saries, transformed into the semblance of Râma's jester, and Vishwâmitra's scribe, then enter the stage. They are to detain Râma until Râvana has decoyed the real Sîta. The unforeseen presence of the true jester comes as an unpleasant surprise, but the quick-witted sham-scribe whispers in Râma's ear: "Be on your guard, Sire, for that fool by your side is not your vidûshaka, but a râkshasa in disguise." Râma is deaf to the address of either friend or foe, and only sees Sîta's illusive form. In the meantime, the sham-fool, who has sufficient wit to keep in the background, is joined by the real scribe, and both, in their turn, are mistaken as regards each other's identity. After some more blunders on either side, and many a comic situation arising therefrom, all four are confronted in the end, and the whole fraud is exposed. The genuine scribe and jester now implore Râma earnestly to return with them at once, but the two tricksters put the Prince into a deep trance, and suggest to his impressionable mind that Sîta is distracted at the thought of his prolonged absence, and in her despair means to throw herself down yon precipice. Poor Râma, ruler of multi-

tudes, is no longer master of himself. In his subconscious state he feels an exquisite pain at the intimation of the horrible news, and hurries after the imaginary Sîta, being determined either to save his love or to share her untimely death. The jugglers are jubilant, but a miracle is wrought by the grace of Heaven, and puts them to confusion. The cliff which the deluded visionary ascends, shrinks of a sudden and contracts to a woman's form. It is Dame Ahalya, to whom the sanctifying touch of the pure-souled Râma has given back her human shape. By Indra's help, she is able to show her gratitude and take the hypnotic spell cff her deliverer. The two demons, seeing the day go against them, presently change into a pair of swift-footed antelopes, and skip off hurriedly in different directions. Râma goes in search of Sîta, and is only just in time to rescue her from the brutal force of Râvana. At the husband's unexpected sight, the vile demon-king lets go his prey and takes to shameful flight.

Râma literature has, in proportion to the population, even a larger circulation in Ceylon than on the continent of India. As the Singhalese are passionately fond of

music and dancing, Râma and Sîta have been transferred from the national theatre to the operatic stage, just as Sigfrid and Brunhild, in Germany, have passed from the theatrical boards to the opera house. Râma operas are much appreciated in Kandy and Colombo, and often last from sunset until dawn, some of them being half as long as Wagner's *Ring*.

12. Râjashekhar

Nâtaka is the technical term for a Hindu drama in which doughty knights and high-born damsels utter lofty thoughts, and display noble sentiments. Nâtikas, on the other hand, touch on domestic incidents such as occur among the humbler classes.[1] *Hamlet* and *King Lear* come under the former heading, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *She Stoops to Conquer* under the latter. The heroic comedies of Spain, in which royalty, priestly mages, and national heroes are staged, resemble the Hindu nâtakas, but the *comedias de*

[1] These definitions are laid down in Bharata's dramaturgy, which native tradition derives from the Nâtya Veda or ancient Stage Wisdom.

capa y espada, with their gay *personnel* of private cavaliers wearing "cape and sword" after the Spanish fashion, and attended by blustering serving-men, are more like nâtikas. Again, in the kindred branch of fiction, Scott's romances might well be compared to nâtakas, because the leading characters are, as a rule, of noble birth, and speak choice English,—the homely Lowland dialect (broad Scotch) being employed by minor figures only. But Dickens's novels would be nâtikas, since they move on a lower social plane, and introduce a jumble of Cockney English and provincial slang. The leading personages in a Hindu nâtaka converse in polished Sanskrit. Nâtikas, on the other hand, have a much larger admixture of Prâkrit dialogue. A nâtika written entirely in Prâkrit is called sattaka. Most sattakas are spectacular pieces, full of the sensational and the marvellous, but deficient in psychological interest. Numbers of them were penned in the old literary vernaculars, such as Mahârâshtri and Shauraseni, but only one, composed by Râjashekhar, has survived. The poet, who appears to have lived in the tenth century of our era,

has also left a nâtaka, which we will briefly examine as an illustration of his dramatic talent.

The soothsayers have predicted that whosoever marries Lady Âvali shall gain overlordship of India. Vidyâdhar's Prime Minister firmly believes in the truth of the oracle, and intends to make the damsel one of the Râja's wives. In order to carry out the patriotic scheme, he induces Âvali's father, who is Governor of a remote province, to have his daughter presented at Court. The loyal minister and his wife invite the young lady to spend a season at their town house. One day the King calls, and their pretty guest is given an opportunity to see Vidyâdhar without being seen by him. The consequence is that Âvali falls in love with the handsome Râja. The Premier's wife, in whom she confides, easily persuades her fair visitor to don boy's clothes, and enter the royal household as a page. As Âvali bears a striking resemblance to her younger brother Varma, there is but little difficulty in introducing her at the palace by his name.

In the next act, the Râja makes love to Princess Kuvalay, the daughter of a vassal

king, without heeding the pitiful remonstrances of his indignant spouse, who is resolved to pay the insult back with interest. The Queen makes Vidyâdhar believe that young Varma, with her permission, has sent for his sister, the boy feeling lonely without the accustomed playmate. The artful Rani, well knowing the King's amorous disposition, even throws out an ironical hint that on her part there would be no serious objection to his marriage with Lady Âvali, whom she represents as good-looking and accomplished. Her Majesty's real intention is to have the beardless page dressed up as Âvali, and after the Râja's mock wedding with the youth, to celebrate Varma's nuptials with Kuvalay. By this clever stratagem she means to kill two birds with one stone; to dispose of a troublesome rival, and to humiliate the King.

Vidyâdhar, after consulting his Prime Minister, readily agrees to the treacherous proposal, all the more eagerly as he is delighted with Âvali's portrait, which he has seen in the Premier's house. By royal command the apparent Varma is robed in bridal garments, and all the maids-of-

honour laughingly declare that the lad looks, to perfection, every inch a girl—as is really the case. Kuvalay loves the Râja dearly, and willingly consents to be one of the bridesmaids, upon the Queen's word of honour that the Princess, too, is to marry the King directly after his wedding with Lady Âvali.

The nuptial rites are nearly completed when a mounted courier brings a private message from Âvali's noble parent, thanking the Queen for the gracious reception she has been pleased to give his daughter at the zenana, and entreating Her Majesty to make the measure of her kindness full by finding a suitable husband for the motherless girl. The Rani is hopelessly entangled in her own meshes, and unable to retract a marriage which has been solemnized at her bidding. Nor can she honourably refuse the redemption of her pledge to Kuvalay, whose legal union with the King must now receive her sanction. The Queen, indeed, is wise in her folly. With the best possible grace she begs the Râja to accept two brides at her hands. She makes light of her deep-laid schemes, and greets both ladies smilingly as her

dear sisters and junior partners in the affections of her lord. Official despatches convey the welcome intelligence that the royal arms have been victorious east and west, and that Vidyâdhar is acknowledged as Samrâj or Universal Emperor of Hindustan. The play ends with his proclamation as Kaisar-i-Hind.[1]

Râjashekhar was not only a prolific

[1] In the Heroic Age Indian ladies held a higher place than with advancing culture. Epic India can boast of a Nala and Râma; like Hector and Ulysses, the two râjas contracted one marriage only. But even Sîta was banished by her husband, while Damayanti and Shakuntala were cruelly deserted. Polytheism has lured many a contemplative pagan into pantheistic visions which tend to destroy the healthy sense of personality and moral responsibility. In like manner, polygamy, which has long been the general system among the Hindu aristocracy, is fatal to conjugal fidelity and to domestic peace. Western civilization at least professes purer ideals; the laws of Europe punish bigamy as a grave offence. The sanctity of Christian wedlock is but a perpetuation of the dignity and respect enjoyed by Roman matrons. The countrymen of Lucretia and Virginia had only one lawful wife, and the dominance of monogamy in Romance and Teutonic countries may well be due, as Lecky points out, to the expansion of Roman rule.

We have considerably altered the story of Râjashekhar's play to suit the purpose of this book. The names, too, have been shortened. In the original, Râja and Princess are called Vidyâdharamalla and Kuvalayamâla, while sister and brother bear the formidable names Mrigânkâvali and Mrigânkavarman. Kuvalaya, which signifies "water lily", may be conveniently pronounced Kuvalay, after the precedent of Himalay. The poet's name must be kept distinct from Shekhar, one of the dramatis personæ in the Nâgânanda.

writer, but an expert penman familiar with the technique of stage effects. But there is a lack of individuality in many of his characters. The poet has also contributed to the National Theatre of India. His LITTLE RÂMÂYANA is about twice the length of *King Henry the Eighth*. All that is preserved of the LITTLE MAHÂ-BHÂRATA is a fragment consisting of two acts; death seems to have intervened before the drama could be completed. The LITTLE RÂMÂYANA deserves brief mention. Sîta is forcibly detained by Râvana, who flies into a passion because she scorns to listen to his insolent suit. He then gives way to a melancholy mood. The Lord Chamberlain of Lanka is much concerned about his brooding master, and feels duty-bound to cheer him up. Having an inventive turn of mind, his lordship constructs a huge doll which somewhat resembles Sîta. The large eyeballs roll from side to side, and the ruby lips are slightly parted. A parrot, trained to talk certain words of affection, is placed inside the doll's head. The demon-king laughs heartily at the comical effect, and feels all the better for the clever entertainment. A

good laugh is often better than the best sermon.

13. Marionettes and Pantomimes

The large cities of India have proper theatres, both stationary and itinerant, just as London, New York, or Melbourne, but the teeming millions up and down the country are deprived of the pleasure and instruction which stage-acting is intended to confer. The only kind of spectacle accessible to the Indian peasantry, more particularly in the Dekhan, are puppet shows set up in the open fields or on the highroad. The Sanskrit for actor is mâgadha or bhârata; the word for puppet is panchâli. It is obvious that the Gangetic valley, which gave birth to epic minstrelsy, is also the home of Indian theatricals. Travelling shows may have originated in Panchâla-land, and spread over the Dekhan, and thence across the sea to the Malay Archipelago. Panchâli entertainments are known to have been popular in ancient Java. Europe is not without a parallel. Punch and Judy migrated from the South of Italy, their native

land, through France to the British Isles.[1]

The oldest Indo-European book in which puppets are mentioned is the Mahâ-Bhârata. The Brihat Katha alludes to a young girl who amuses herself with a set of movable dolls. One of them can dance, by means of some mechanical contrivance, another screeches, and a third carries a tiny cup of water without spilling it.—It is the custom of Indian showmen to proceed on a local tour after exhibiting in the busy thoroughfares of Madras, Bombay, and other towns. Horns are blown, and gongs are beaten, in order to attract public attention. The puppets are made of wood and cardboard, and can be easily worked with strings or by wire.[2] Their limbs are cleverly jointed so that the panchâlis may

[1] "Punch" has nothing whatever to do with panchâli or with punching people's heads, but is a contraction of Punchinello or rather Pulcinello, the buffoon of the Neapolitan stage. The Italian word is connected with "pullet", and means chicken-hearted, with reference to Mr. Punch's empty bragging and boasting. Subsequently, popular fancy associated Punch with Pontius Pilate, and mated him with Judy, i.e. Judas. The five-fold mixture of brandy and hot water to which lemon, spice, and sugar are added is also called punch, which, like the Panchâlas or Five Boroughs, is derived from pancha, the Sanskrit word for five.

[2] The high antiquity of Indian puppet shows is corroborated by the term sûtra-dhâra, i.e. stage manager. The word means literally "holding the strings, pulling the wires".

freely gesticulate with arms and legs. The programme of the travelling troupes generally contains a large variety of items. The movements of the gaudily dressed dummies are adapted to the recital of a light and laughable dialogue. As a rule, the subject is taken from the traditional lore of the two national epics. But political history has considerably enlarged the repertoire. Stories of Alexander's invasion, incidents from the fierce fights with Hun and Moslem, the English Conquest, and the Indian Mutiny mark some of the stages in the evolution of the Hindu puppet show. Punch and Judy have grown up under similar conditions. The early shows in England were strictly confined to religious subjects. The Virgin Mary and the blessed saints were the principal marionettes previous to the Reformation; the building of Solomon's Temple, Jonah and the whale, and other Biblical stories furnished additional entertainment.[1] But pro-

[1] The marionettes of the old Italian exhibitions were originally, as the name imports, miniature images of the Virgin Mary. The Punch and Judy show has long been divested of its sacred character, but is still termed Marionette Theatre in Continental countries. Wax figures of the Blessed Virgin used to be carried in Roman Catholic processions, and it is here that the historical origin of the European panchâlis must be looked for.

fane history came to be associated with the marionette stage in the stirring age of Queen Elizabeth, and gradually superseded sacred subjects. The battles with the Spaniards, and the destruction of the Armada, Drake and Raleigh, gold-digging in Peru, and tobacco-planting in Virginia, were the talk everywhere in merry England, at Court and on 'Change, in the coffee taverns in Fleet Street, and at the puppet shows on Holborn Bridge. No less popular were the marionette theatres on the other side of the Channel. Goethe narrates in *Wilhelm Meister* (translated by Carlyle) how interested his countrymen were in them, and to what excellence marionette exhibitions developed in Germany during the eighteenth century. After the Battle of the Nile, Nelson became a favourite with the English, his deeds being celebrated in music halls and on the puppet boards. "Punch, my boy!" the naval hero is reported to have said on one occasion, "come on board my good ship, and help me to fight the French. I'll make you a captain or a commodore, if you like it."

"But I don't like it," whimpered Mr. Punch, "I might get drowned."

"Never fear that," retorted Nelson; "he who is born to be hanged is sure not to be drowned."

The people of India look upon dumb-shows with as much favour as the English do on Christmas pantomimes. Bishop Heber describes the "Siege of Lanka" as he saw it performed at the Râm-Lîla festival in Allahabad: Râvana's palace was constructed of bamboo reeds, and decorated with coloured paper. Doors and windows were gaily painted, and a frightful paper giant stood on the roof of the building. The ogre was fifteen feet high, and had twelve arms, with some kind of weapon in each. At his feet sat a little girl meant to be Sîta; two green dragons made of inflated bladder were guarding the prisoner. The poor little mite was wrapped in a gorgeous veil, and must have felt very tired, for she drooped her curly head, and was soon fast asleep. Hanuman, having a monkey's mask pulled over his ears, was capering and gambolling outside the city gates. He had a long bushy tail, and his skin was dyed with indigo. Two strapping lads, about twelve years of age, represented Râma and Laksh-

man. They were holding levee under a spacious awning, and each carried a toy sabre in his right hand and a gilt bow in his left. All sorts of trinkets covered their slim bodies, the bare parts being daubed with chalk and vermilion. Large crowds of spectators almost blocked the road, and the pageant lasted three consecutive nights.[1]

[1] In England the rites of May were observed with games, sports, masques, and dances. The great sight at a Mayfair was the mock fight between the black winter giant and the white-horsed knight, who was to snatch Maid Marian, the Queen of Sunshine, out of the ogre's open jaws. The final scene was a gleaming sword dance, in which the giant-killer once more displayed his swordcraft. The fiddlers played a lively jig; the hobby horse, profusely decked with sprigs of may and bunting, pranced gaily as in a courtly tilt; romantic lore, glee, jest, satire were freely scattered in a jumble of song. Meddlesome hawkers sold the latest ballad of the dragon-slayer's doughty deeds, and how the king's daughter was set free from the cloud-giant's gloomy dungeon. The old guy of a dragon, a clumsy piece of carpentry and mummery, was burnt in a crackling bonfire, amidst shouts of jollity, and Maid Marian was crowned Queen of the May.

Puppet show and sword dance have come down from hoary antiquity, and were associated with unclean pagan rites. The early Church recast and renamed both Marionettes and Mary's or Morris dancers. The gallant fight of sportive Spring and crabbed Winter has ever been a favourite topic of

14. Politics on the Stage

Among the most precious gems in the casket of English literature are Shakespeare's historical plays. His immortal brush has touched up and given lustre to three hundred years of English warfare and kingship. But the history of India has been sadly neglected by her great poets. Only two Sanskrit dramas record a brief span of political events: MÂLAVIKA AND AGNIMITRA by Kâlidâsa, and the MUDRA-RÂKSHASA by Vishâkhadatta. The former play is rich in poetic sentiment, and glows with the fire of a warm imagination. The characteristic points of the Mudra-Râkshasa, on the other hand, are a dry humour, and that cold glitter which, now

Aryan nature poetry. The reverse of our gold coins still commemorates "St. George and the Dragon", and the knight's cream-coloured charger (the golden sunbeams) lingers on, though a mere shadow, in the "gee-gees", with tinkling bells and gaudy trappings, at the merry-go-round of country fairs. But the real significance of the dragon fight (the triumph of light over darkness) has been forgotten, and the oldest English folk dance, which reflects the annual spring drama, is often explained away as a Moorish (= Morris) or Spanish custom.

and again, renders the budget speech of some great parliamentarian so brilliant and effective. According to native scholars, Vishâkhadatta was a younger contemporary of Bhavabhûti, but it is tempting to reflect that he might have lived towards the end of the twelfth century, when the Mohammedan armies had nearly completed the conquest of Hindustan. In that case, it must have been with a sigh of regret and a sense of relief that the poet's musing mind turned from the national humiliation back to the distant time of Alexander's departure from India, and to the subsequent consolidation of the vast Hindu colossus under the vigorous rule of Chandragupta.

That great Emperor reposed full confidence in Chânakya, his Imperial Chancellor, who is represented as having slain King Nanda, and helped Chandragupta to mount the throne of Magadha. The new ruler, who had sprung from lowly ranks, found more favour with the people than with the nobles of Magadha; he was particularly odious to Lord Râkshasa, the trusty old minister of Nanda.[1] The

[1] Râkshasa must not be associated with his mythical name-

honourable statesman denounced and repudiated the unscrupulous usurper; but swimming against the popular current, he was in constant danger of his life. At length, Râkshasa fled from Patna under cover of night. Owing to his influence and rectitude, he was soon able to form a powerful coalition among the neighbouring Râjas against the royal upstart.

Chânakya was at once crafty in his dealings and loyal to his master. It was the aim of his policy to strengthen the government in power by means of estranging Râkshasa from the confederate Princes, and, if possible, of winning him over to Chandragupta's side. To gain that end, the Chancellor deliberately provoked the Emperor's displeasure, and then suddenly withdrew from the royal presence, apparently in deep resentment.

In the meantime, the ex-minister was busy organizing the opposition. Chânakya's spies followed him everywhere, and watched his movements as closely as their personal safety would permit. They had instruc-

sakes, the savage Râkshasas of primitive Ceylon, nor King Nanda with Krishna's foster-father. Nanda or Ânanda means Joy, like our Letitia, but is a man's name. Mâlati's jilted fiancé is Nandan.

tions to spread the false rumour that Chandragupta had bribed Râkshasa, who was playing a double game. They even intimated that he had been offered the post of Chânakya, who had forfeited the Imperial favour on account of his overbearing and dictatorial measures. At first the alarmist report was hardly taken seriously. But it was believed more readily when some commercial travellers returned from Magadha with the sensational news that the great Chancellor was actually in disgrace with the Emperor. The Râja at whose Court Râkshasa was staying at the time could not help suspecting his guest of treachery, but as there was not sufficient evidence to prove his guilt, he was simply given notice to quit the State at once.

Râkshasa, disguised as a pedlar, returned to Patna, where he rejoined his wife and children; he had left them under the care of a dear old friend, a goldsmith by trade. No sooner was Chânakya apprised of Râkshasa's secret arrival than he threw his cards down openly, and showed his hand to Chandragupta, who not only pardoned the Chancellor's shrewd audacity, but was delighted with the bold stroke of policy.

A warrant was issued for Râkshasa's arrest, and a charge of high treason was brought against the jeweller for harbouring a political spy. Râkshasa was taken before Chânakya, who left him the alternative either to become the cause of his friend's ignominious death, or to prove himself not to be a spy and sedition-monger, but a supporter of the present government. "And the best way Your Excellency can do that," Chânakya added blandly, "is to accept a ministerial post which His Majesty is pleased to offer you through me." Râkshasa was touched by the Chancellor's delicate advances, and entered Chandragupta's service.[1]

15. A Metaphysical Play

Vedânta has left traces everywhere on the popular cults of India, however much they merged gnâna into bhakti—self-identification with the Infinite into adoration

[1] The plot of the Mudra-Râkshasa resembles the dramatic crisis of Shakuntala in so far as both plays are built up around a mudra or signet-ring. Wilson's *Theatre of the Hindus* (2 vols., 3rd edition, London, 1871) contains readable translations of the more important dramas discussed in chapters vi, vii, viii, x, and xiv.

of a personal Redeemer. Early Christian influences have intensified the element of bhakti in Krishnaism, and still more in Râmaism. But even Tulsi Das (+1624), who sang a new song of Râma, the friend of sinners, could not have composed his fervent bhakti poetry, that treasury of Hindu devotion, without a conception of Vedânta.[1]

Krishnamishra, who flourished in the beginning of the twelfth century, wrote a play to the glory of Vedânta. The title is PRABODHA CHANDRODAY, or the Rise of the Moon of True Knowledge.[2] Hundreds of years before Bunyan thought of personifying Christian virtues and vices, Krishnamishra composed this Indian pilgrim's progress in a dramatic form. To convey the spirit of the Prabodha Chandroday adequately, we have ventured on a paraphrase, rendering the quaint Sanskrit terminology in the more familiar garb of Western thought.

Truth and Error are the sons of Individual Consciousness, and grandsons of

[1] The Vedânta philosophy is explained in the *Short History*, chapter ix.

[2] As Himalay is short for Himâlaya, so Chandroday for Chandrodaya, which, again, is a contraction of Chandra-udaya, i.e. the moon's rising.

King Infinite. The children of Truth are Faith and Reason, their respective issue being Religion and Science. Error begets a long line of descendants, who gradually take possession of the earth.

Error is the first to appear on the stage. He remarks to his Prime Minister what a good thing it is that the dominion of Truth is dwindling every day. He is only troubled about an old prophecy that Prince Vedânta is to be born from the spiritual contact of Science and Religion, and that Vedânta is destined to destroy Error. Such an event, the minister observes, is happily far off, because the two cousins have long been divorced, and every attempt to bring them together again has hitherto been vain.

The next actor to come forward is King Truth. On seeing the white-robed Râja with his shining crown, Error hastily beats his retreat. Truth is presently joined by his wife, Queen Love, who bears the joyful tidings that she has reconciled Science and Religion after all.

The situation looks grave for the party in opposition, and King Error hurriedly summons a Cabinet Council. The heir to the throne, Prince I-Come-First, attends,

so does the Premier, and all the other ministers of Error. The Rev. Dr. Cocksure, expounder of the latest theology which is established in the land of Error, urges the honourable members of the Council to capture Benares, and deliver the holy city out of the enemy's hands. "Whoever holds Benares", are the closing words of his eloquent oratory, "possesses the key of India. I pray God to help us in this most righteous enterprise against the vile pretender who goes by the name of Truth Revealed." A resolution is passed unanimously; Error's forces are to take the sacred city by storm.

After a long siege Benares surrenders. The townsmen forswear Truth, and submit to the rule of Error. The new King grants an audience to General Chárvâka, who typifies the materialistic school of Hindu thought.[1] Chârvâka reports that a mutiny has broken out in Bengal and Orissa, and that the insurgents have resolved henceforth to throw in their lot with the forlorn cause of Truth. This outrageous rebellion is believed to be due to the secret workings of Queen Love.

[1] Chârvâka means literally "glib talker'

The incensed general receives orders to mobilize King Error's well-disciplined troops at once; they are to attack Truth, and oppose Love's machinations.

The next act introduces a gentle, timid girl who is dead-tired, and piteously cries for her mother. The maiden's name is Devotion; she is the favourite daughter of Princess Faith. Buddhism, Jainism, and other heretic upstarts crowd the stage with their ostentatious wives. All these ladies pose as Faith. Devotion cheers up on hearing her dear mother's name, but when she beholds the showy and ugly persons who have assumed it, her tears flow copiously. The various "isms" console her with high-flown ethics and metaphysics, but their verbosity is cut short by the appearance of General Chârvâka. The gallant soldier is attended by a smart *corps-de-ballet*, and, in his turn, enlivens the dull lecturers with utilitarian principles. Everyone present, be he Vedic believer or Nonconformist, must pledge him with a cup of wine and tread a gay measure. Chârvâka asks sweet Devotion for the first dance, and informs his fair partner where Faith is to be found. "All these so-called faiths

are humbugs," he remarks; "there is but one true faith, my dear, and that is—'Eat, drink, and be merry'."

Chârvâka, not satisfied with ridiculing Faith, insults her personally, but Love, who can do all things, shields her friend, and sends the following message to King Truth: "The hour of battle has struck. The enemy surrounds us on all sides. We need auxiliary troops, if possible, under the command of Self-Renunciation, who has seen active service in previous campaigns against Error." On receipt of this important despatch, Truth summons his most trusted officers. Humility is to fight against I-Come-First, Holy Obedience against Cocksure's uproarious host, and Charity against Bigotry. Renunciation is made commander-in-chief.

Truth and his forces gain a complete victory, and march on Benares. Error is mortally wounded. Mâya, or cosmic illusion, has called him into this transitory existence. Being on the point of death, Error sends the talisman Mâya back to his grandfather Infinite.

Salvation-by-works is the wife of Individual Consciousness. When she learns

that her darling son Error is dead, the shock kills her. Prince Vedânta speaks comfort to the bereaved husband, and tells him that all individual grief is idle and unreal. Renunciation, the victorious warrior-saint, is then received in audience by Individual Consciousness, who bears up bravely in his personal affliction, and is more resigned, thanks to Vedânta's disinterested counsel. When the time of mourning is over, the jolly widower even thinks of remarriage. The bride-elect is his deceased wife's sister, Lady Salvation-by-faith. Hers is the golden faith which ever distrusts itself, and flows out in constant deeds of charity.

Peace-of-heart, vicegerent of Infinite, now enters the mansions of the King of kings, and finds Science in the arms of Religion. By their side plays young Vedânta, radiant and beautiful, his face aglow with selfless love, his beaming eyes subdued by wisdom's light.

After Error's decease, Truth becomes sole regent of the universe. Bliss and Intelligence support him in the Divine government of earth.[1]

[1] Buddha means "awakened", i.e., no longer dreaming that

16. Prahasans

Laughable pieces such as *The Taming of the Shrew* or *The School for Scandal* are called prahasans in India. They are skits on social follies, brimful with vulgar wit and catchy puns. Like our curtain-raiser, a prahasan has one act only. DHÛRTA SAMÂGAM, or ROGUES IN COUNCIL, is the title of a spicy comedietta belonging to the fifteenth century. We subjoin a brief survey of the plot.

Dame Ananga reigns supreme in the hearts of two religious degenerates, whose debased yoga serves as a convenient cloak for chambering and jugglery. On their daily round of alms-begging, the two meet in Ananga's house. The younger mendicant, in a fit of jealousy, kicks his courting rival, who swears at him.

visible things are real. His *prabodha* (awakening, illumination) took place under the bo-tree, or Tree of Knowledge.

Calderon, in one of his metaphysical plays, compares the dense life of the senses to a dream which precedes the slumbering soul's awakening to spiritual consciousness. The risen soul, no longer clinging to the things of sense, no more in touch with earth's semblances and shadows, tastes the sweet realities of Life in God. Another play by the illustrious Spaniard is based on Daniel, Chapter V, and introduces Idolatry, Reason, and Divine Judgment among the dramatis personæ.

The quarrel waxes hot, and Ananga interferes at last. At her request the disputants agree to have their sordid difference adjusted by Asajjâti. That worthy is a brahmin by birth, and a lawyer by profession, his special calling being arbitration in cases of a delicate nature.[1] He is fetched in, and in his turn finds Ananga's charms irresistible. After listening quietly to the complaints on either side, Asajjâti makes a grave face, and turns up a big law-book. He then pronounces judgment. Both parties are advised to be friends again, and to leave Ananga alone in future. The fee for the legal consultation is rather stiff, but the monks can happily afford it,—fortune-telling, invocations of the dead, and interpretation of dreams being a profitable source of income just then.

When the two are gone, Mûlanâshaka, the barber, enters, and presents to fair Ananga her monthly bill for hair-dressing and nail-trimming. She coolly refers her creditor to Asajjâti. To ingratiate himself with the fascinating landlady, the

[1] Sprung from the lineage (jâti) of sophistry (asat), is the significant meaning of Asajjâti's name.

stingy jurist pays, though with a long face. As a favour in return he wants a shave and a shampoo. The wily barber feels tempted by the gold in Asajjâti's purse, and means to fleece him. He quietly asks Ananga for some packthread, and after soaping his client's face most liberally, ties the lawyer's hands and feet deftly to the heavy chair on which he sits. With the dainty skill of a professional thief, Mûlanâshaka neatly picks the brahmin's pocket, and with many a smile and apology bows himself out of the room. Ananga, standing in the background, holds her sides, and shakes with fits of laughter.

The Dhûrta Samâgam was penned about the same time as the *Mandragola*, or *Magic Potion*, by Machiavel. The Italian prahasan, too, exposes the lascivious morals that prevailed in Rome prior to the apostolate of St. Philip Neri. But the brush of the Florentine statesman was capable of finer touches than that of his Hindu contemporary.[1]

[1] The soma sacrifice which gave rise to the ninth mandala of the Rig Veda is also associated with the oldest prahasans. They were boisterous farces, rough and gruff like the rumbling and grumbling of a thunderstorm. The seeds of tragedy and buffoonery, the fatal and the comic, lie embedded side by side

17. Bhânas

Bhânas or musical sketches are extremely popular in the south of India. They sometimes last from daybreak until nightfall, with long intervals every now and then. Here is a specimen of a bhâna composed by Varada.

The sole actor sits at an open window. He plays a guitar, and greets the approach-

in nature's dissolute forces. The first burlesque ever mentioned in Indian literature re-echoes the howl and growl of the warring elements, the tomfoolery of nature. "A fat nigger who deals in soma is cheated out of a milch cow, the price of his medicinal store. The outwitted blackskin is infuriated, spits and swears, and uses wild threats, but to no purpose. However, his strong language gradually tones down to feeble notes, and his remonstrances become mild and even timid. But all he gets into the bargain is a hiding with a leather thong." The whole frolic is a brahmodya or nature conundrum in a dramatic form. The soma cordial was the delight of Indo-Iranian feasters, the seal and bond of Vedic fellowship. The milky juice of the aromatic mountain herb made an ideal drink which restored and renewed the spirit of the twice-born, even as the heavenly soma which is jealously guarded by black monster-clouds revives the thirsty vegetation. The parched earth cries out for the delicious mead, but the "liquor of the gods" (IX, 109[15]) flows scantily, until the thunderbolt strikes the soma-hoarding miser. Like floods of milk, the silvery showers then stream from the full udder of the rain-cow; the threatening cloud-giant has to give up the fragrant ambrosia. The theatre of war up in the sky supplied the earliest Indian stage with plenty of raw material for the rude charades which were acted in that primitive and superstitious age.

ing dawn. The stillness of the sleeping city and the slowly awakening traffic in the street suggest the next item in the musical programme. A stylishly dressed woman then passes in her carriage. This trifling incident gives rise to some couplets on the fair sex in general, and on married life in particular. A variety of persons are taken off with considerable humour. The comedian next observes a large crowd gathering round a snake charmer. All at once he notices a friend over the way, and accosts him in a snatch of song. An appointment is made to meet at some popular café in the evening. Thus the artist goes on in a rambling fashion, watching and describing, chanting and responding, dropping one subject and taking up another, until the full moon is seen rising in a cloudless sky.[1]

[1] The earliest specimens of bhânas in Sanskrit literature are monologues of a ruined gambler (Rig Veda, X, 34) and of drunken Indra (X, 119). The tenth mandala also contains some prahasans, which were perhaps enacted in seasons of revelry such as preceded the long and dreary sacrifices, even as King Carnival performs his mad pranks just before the solemn season of Lent. The mimicry of a chariot race in which a buxom dame, driving a wretched ox-cart, wins the prize, is the delightful theme of a humorous sanvâda (X, 102).

18. Yâtras

The founder of Islam had a puritanical aversion to story-tellers and stage-actors. When the Mohammedans became rulers of India, they followed in the Prophet's footsteps, and abolished every music hall and playhouse. But coercion is bound to evoke reaction; that is a universal law which holds good at home and in school, in politics and religion, in society and on the stage. In spite of the Moslem precepts, dramatic activity was once more in full swing towards the end of the fourteenth century, more particularly in Nepal and Tirhut. But the literary quality of this aftercrop of Indian plays is far below the high level which was attained in Ujain and Kanouj during the classical ages of Kâlidâsa and Bhavabhûti. The revival in Bengal was religious as well as dramatic; the fermentation worked silently, but was powerful enough to infuse new life into the forsaken temples and antiquated theatres of reawakened India.

An impersonal God is all very well for subtle thinkers who can reason clearly, but

the great masses in every age and clime need a personal Saviour who has become man in order that fallen mankind, uplifted by His perfect example, may draw nearer to God. Vedântists define personal and impersonal as the revealed and hidden side of God, and affirm that the Deity, despite the twofold aspect, is hypostatically one. Like Platonists and Christians they hold that the eternal "substance" beneath the troubled sea of transient appearances is beyond the ken of reason, but, in its infinite goodness taking compassion on the world, is made manifest to the believer's vision. When Hindu philosophy had overthrown the Vedic pantheon, and established Brahma (the Infinite) in the vacated place of divine manifestations, the people of India, with a healthy religious instinct, reverted to the worship of Râma and Krishna, whom they regarded as His visible incarnations. Brahma, the unqualified Deity, they could not understand, but Krishna they believed to be the ideal son of God. Him they could love and adore and imitate, after endowing him with the noblest and best of human qualities. Krishna became the favourite avatâr of the people, and magni-

ficent pagodas were built in his honour along the Orissa coast. About three hundred miles south-west of Calcutta, at Juggernaut, a celebrated Krishna temple was raised as early as the twelfth century. The Krishnaist cult, being bright and artistic, was admirably fitted to invigorate the effete Hindu theatre. Sacred operas were frequently produced in connection with the religious yâtras or processions of the Krishnaists. In a later age these musical dramas came to be called yâtras, even after they were detached from the temple precincts, and associated with the secular stage. Yâtras are no longer composed in Sanskrit or Shauraseni, but chiefly in Bengali. The regeneration of the Indian theatre is mainly due to these refined and often original plays. For their present popularity the yâtras are largely indebted to Krishna-Kamal, pastor of the Vishnu congregation at Dacca, north-east of Calcutta.[1]

[1] Even the Vedic age knew yâtras—a venerable heirloom of Aryan antiquity. The gods of the Rig Veda were hymned in choral processions. Some of the sanvâda-hymns re-echo the rude mirth of the primitive yâtra-dances. But the alleged affinity between Sanskrit *rig* (praise) and German *reigen* (choral dance) is altogether uncertain, although both words point to a

Bengal has always been the stronghold of Krishnaist literature, and the starting-point for new religious movements. It was here that Jayadev wrote his beautiful Gîta Govinda. Hosts of Krishnaist poets and philosophers flourished in Bengal. It was in Bengal that Buddha preached the brotherhood of all men, irrespective of caste and colour, that Chaitanya reformed native society, and that Râmakrishna encouraged his spiritual sons to go on a

common Indo-European root expressive of gleam and gladness.

The Anglo-Saxons, too, celebrated the awakening of spring with solemn yâtras around the merry maypole. They sang the praises of gay Flora and her mother Earth, with carol and response, in truly dramatic fashion. On classical soil, morris dancers carried phallus images, the wanton emblem of procreative force, in holiday processions. Such public exhibitions, which Shivaists and Tantrists even now include in their temple services, would outrage our moral sense, but merely suggested the fruitful womb of nature to her ancient votaries. However, the pagan mysteries were bound to degrade into obscene rites and wild orgies. The early Church, not choosing to break with the popular usages and hallowed superstitions of the Gentiles, wisely grafted on to the world-old festival of spring the holier Easter rejoicings. Christ is risen at the very season when nature, clad in festive garb, rises from her long winter sleep. The depraved phallic worship had to make room for the sweet Passion plays. Hoary with the Christian traditions of more than a thousand years, they are still enacted by the peasantry at Oberammergau, and in other villages of Bavaria and the Tyrol. Religious processions gave rise to the beginnings of dramatic literature both in India and Europe.

mission to America and England, where they have boldly attempted to reconcile Christian Revelation and modern science on the deep foundation of Vedânta.

19. A Bengal Revivalist

Chaitanya was born in Nadia, towards the end of the fifteenth century. He combined, in a high degree, practical sense and moral courage. Chaitanya was a powerful preacher adorned with all the winning graces of a saint. Pratâpa, Vassal-King of Bengal, had the Reformer's sermons collected. It is possible that Chaitanya also wrote some yâtras; anyhow, he encouraged the religious melodrama on the Bengal stage, and his followers contributed plays to the Krishnaist theatre. Most prominent among them are Rûpa-Goswâmi, well known as a poet and statesman, and Karnapur, who dramatized Chaitanya's life. The piece bears the title CHAITANYA CHANDRODAY, i.e. the Rise of Chaitanya's Luminary, and is regarded by literary critics as the finest Krishnaist play.

20. Chaitanya Chandroday

Chaitanya is on the village green. His mother, Sachi, pays him homage, and a happy group of peasant girls sing praises to the latest incarnation of Krishna.

In the second act, Chaitanya's favourite disciples, Bhakti and Adwaita, converse on the nature of faith. Both walk together to the house of Chaitanya's uncle, where a dramatic performance of the Gîta Govinda is to be given.

Chaitanya intimates his intention to become a sannyâsi.[1] He parts from his native place, and Ganga weeps that the saint has left her shores. The tears of the river goddess mingle freely with those of Father Ocean, to whom she narrates the touching farewell scenes which she has witnessed.

Pilgrims arrive from the Carnatic coast, and from the banks of the river Godavery. They cannot tell enough of the marvellous conversions which the saint has wrought.

[1] A saint who has broken every link in the chain of natural affection. Complete self-surrender deepens his God-consciousness (=chaitanya) and interior peace.

Chaitanya returns from his missionary tour. King Pratâpa and his Prime Minister, Rûpa-Goswâmi, beg to be accepted among his followers.[1]

21. Universal Religion

Our task is nearly finished. We have traced the hidden sources of the Indian theatre, and have rapidly surveyed its variegated course through scenery most enchanting. We lost sight of the dried-up current amidst shallow sands and in the mudbanks of frivolity. We watched the last efforts of the decadent drama to

[1] Bhakti and Adwaita are symbolical names. The former means devotion to a Supreme Personality—the yearning for the love and pardon of an avatâr. The test of bhakti is utter self-abasement, but fearless and never servile. A-dwaita or non-dualism teaches that a self-effaced (nirvâna) soul and the eternal spring of all created life are not dual, i.e. separate, but one in essence. A dull and vacant frame of mind is the very opposite to the nirvâna state, since a spiritual combatant must ever watch and distrust himself, ere he can hope to slay the hundred-headed serpent of selfishness and sluggishness, and, with the knife of gnâna, tear up the deep-rooted weeds of dwaita in the garden of his soul. As Christians believe that original sin is inherited, and that baptism removes the moral stain, so dwaita, in the eyes of Adwaitists, is inbred in every man until the Adwaita philosophy (Vedânta) removes mâya, i.e. the "great illusion".

The classical exposition of bhakti is given in the Bhagavad Gîta; of adwaita in the Great Jungle Upanishad.

emerge, purified, from the dreary quagmire, and to enlist in the cause of national, and, as we shall see presently, of universal religion.

(*a*) Two Great Mogul Emperors

Timur Khan and his savage hordes captured Delhi about the year 1400, but the Mogul Empire did not gain a firm hold on India until the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Babar, sixth in descent from Timur, sat on the peacock throne. Babar was daring in the field, and prudent in council. He fought many victorious battles during his short-lived reign. After a day's hard fighting, the great Kaiser would retire to the quiet of his tent and compose Persian poetry, the elegance and propriety of which have been much admired. Nanak, who lived in his reign, conceived the lofty idea of blending Islam with Hinduism. He felt that the spiritual kernel in both religions is the same, however much the historical husk and the overgrowth of dogma may vary. Chaitanya, in his extensive travels, possibly made the personal acquaintance of

Nanak, and may even have influenced his teaching. The new faith was to do away with Hindu idolatry and Moslem fanaticism, but to retain what was acceptable to both sides and offensive to neither. The movement spread among the Punjab aristocracy, and the nobles who gathered round Nanak called themselves his sikhs or disciples. The Sikhs are a splendid race of soldiers, as might be expected of the martial Rajputs from whose ranks they chiefly issued. The scriptures of the Sikhs are monotheistic, and their moral stamina and religious zeal recall some of the finest Hebrew types depicted in the Old Testament, whilst in courage and physique the sons of Nanak are superior to the children of Israel.

Akbar, a grandson of Babar, ruled over Hindustan in the sixteenth century. Just as Brahmins and Buddhists had served King Harsha with equal loyalty, so Hindus and Moslems forgot their acrimony and rivalry in a common feeling of devotion to Akbar. Under that best of Indian emperors, every religion, Christianity included, enjoyed full liberty and equal privileges. Akbar was a strict Mus-

sulman himself, but some of the highest government posts were filled by Hindu officials. He had the New Testament translated from Greek into Persian, and ordered an Allah Upanishad to be written. Under his auspices, weekly meetings were convened in the royal palace to set forth doctrinal differences fearlessly, and give the rival arguments an impartial hearing. There is but One True God, exclaims a Vedic seer, though they whom He inspires call Him by many names.[1] He is the Soul of our souls, the Self of ourselves, and as long as we love Him and trust in Him with the simple faith of children, it matters little whether His name be Allah or Jehovah, the Infinite and Absolute, or Our Father and Creator. Names are but fumes of incense after all. The Emperor Akbar made the same bold and bright declaration of faith.

"O God! in every temple and in every tongue I hear the people praise Thee. Every religion says, Thou art Adwaita—One without a second. Islam and polytheism feel after Thee. Whether I frequent Mosque or Pagoda, Thee I search

[1] Ekam sat viprâh bahudhâ vadanti (Rig Veda I, 164).

in every sanctuary. Thy elect are neither orthodox nor heterodox, but stand behind the screen of Thy veiled Truth, as lotuses and roses feed on the selfsame mother-soil."

> "Shall the rose
> Cry to the lotus: no flower thou? the palm
> Call to the cypress: I alone am fair?
> The mango spurn the melon at his foot?"[1]

But however broad and tolerant the views of Akbar were, his Moslem subjects could not leave the infidels alone. The same violent fanaticism which has broken out, over and over again, in Bulgarian atrocities and Armenian massacres, found vent, at an earlier age, in the cruel persecution of the Hindus which began soon after Akbar's death.

(*b*) The Sikhs

The Sikhs were quite willing to mediate between the two races and religions, but fared worst. While the mild natives of Oudh and Bengal suffered terribly from Mohammedan cruelties, and offered but little resistance, the high-minded Sikhs

[1] Quoted from Tennyson.

were Rajputs (which means Sons of Kings), and had inherited the warlike propensities shown by their Aryan sires thousands of years ago; the early Vedic colonists doggedly wrested the Punjab from the savage aborigines by endless guerrilla wars. Nanak's faith was vigorously defended with the sword, and the Sikhs became the bitterest enemies of the Mogul Empire.

The Hindu character, whatever its defects may be, is singularly devoid of bigotry and fanaticism, which darken so many pages of Mohammedan history. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that, during the Moslem age, secret societies were at work in the Punjab, and endeavoured surreptitiously to overthrow the ruling power. The conspirators held their seditious conventicles under the guise of religious meetings, and it was an act of self-protection on the part of the Government if they punished the offenders, and suppressed Hinduism as a hotbed of revolutionary plots.[1] No doubt, excessive

[1] Just as England and Germany have been compelled at times to use armed force in order to put down Fenian aspirations or Polish nationalism.

zeal often led to massacres both in medieval India and Europe. But the Mogul Throne did not always sanction, and the Christian Church had often to restrain, the fanatical outbreaks of an enraged populace, despite the oft-repeated reproach that, in the Middle Ages, by ecclesiastical command, many a noble soul that dared embark on a perilous sea of adverse currents

> "perished at the stake
> For tenets he would not forsake".

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Râja Guru Govinda was the leading chieftain of the Sikh clans.[1] Military ambition and religious conviction urged him on to break down all prejudice of caste, and he freely invited vaishyas and shûdras to join his standard against the hated oppressor. But although the Sikhs fought with the fierceness of tigers and the courage of lions,[2] they were utterly routed by the Imperialist forces. Those who escaped

[1] Guru and Sikh (Master and Disciple) are chips of the old Vedic phraseology. "Shepherd, Teacher, King" is the literal rendering, if we reverse the order of words, of Râja Guru Govinda.

[2] They were actually called singhs or lions, and Singh is still a patronymic of many Sikh and Rajput families.

from the battlefield were hunted like wild beasts from one stronghold to another. No more was heard of them for another generation. But about 1740, at that unhappy period when the Jacobites rose for the doomed cause of the exiled Stuart family, the Sikhs likewise rallied, and once more issued from their mountain fastnesses that they might overthrow the Mogul dynasty. The insurgents met with varying successes. Being masters of Lahore at one time, they were repulsed, on another occasion, with a loss of a hundred thousand men. Although the Sikhs had a National Council, they never became a nation, but were always split up into numbers of petty free-states, which were disaffected and disunited because of the constant jealousies and dissensions among their chieftains.[1]

Their most powerful chief was Ranjit

[1] It was in 1745 that the Celtic clans of Scotland gave active support to Charles Edward the Pretender in his gallant but hopeless attempt to regain the throne of England, and re-establish the Catholic faith. Gael and Sikh, in their tribal pride, military valour, and extravagant notions of honour, strongly resemble each other. Never-ending domestic feuds and clannish obstinacy enfeebled the brave Punjab men quite as much as the Scotch Highlanders, and greatly facilitated the ultimate subjection of both races to British rule.

Singh. He ruled in the Punjab about 1800; the seat of his government was Lahore. Other Sikh republics lay scattered between the Sutlej and Jumna; all of which repudiated Ranjit's claim to overlord them. Prince Ranjit then appealed to the English, and Lord Metcalfe concluded a treaty of friendship with the State of Lahore. The debatable land between the two rivers was placed under British protection, and nowadays the various Sikh clans form native states with a British resident.

(*c*) Church Universal

The idea of a universal church, which is discussed in American magazines as the latest novelty in religion, has engaged the Hindu mind for many centuries. In the Mohammedan era, Hinduism was ready for amalgamation with Islam, and under English rule it is equally prepared to join forces with Christianity. Rammohun Roy, who died in Bristol about 1830, was a sound Vedic and Biblical scholar. After many years of close and critical study he felt convinced that the teachings of Jesus, in their substance, coincide with the tenets

of Vedânta. It was the noble ideal of this great and good man to bring the upper classes of England and India nearer in fellow-feeling on the basis of their common faith. But while Rammohun Roy was more of a scholar and a saint, Keshub Chunder Sen, a devoted friend of Râmakrishna, had a thoroughly practical turn of mind. He took up Rammohun's work, and even attempted the fusion of all three religions into what he called the New Dispensation. Like Chaitanya he made use of the stage for popularizing his religious views. It was by his encouragement that the dramatist Trailokya wrote the NAVA VRINDÂVAN.[1] Keshub himself acted the Yogi in the play, and carried a cosmopolitan banner with a curiously embroidered design. Cross and Crescent were lovingly interlaced with Buddhist and Hinduist emblems. A dove representing the Holy Ghost seemed to succumb to the hard blows of human reason, but

[1] Zealous Krishnaists have the same reverence for Vrindâvan Forest, the scene of the youthful follies of their shepherd-god, as devout Christians, with a far better right, have for the Holy City. In some respects, the Nava (i.e. New) Vrindâvan corresponds to the New Jerusalem depicted in the Book of Revelation, chapter xxi. The resemblance is perhaps due to Christian influences.

the heaven-descended bird reascended triumphantly, bearing around his neck the inscription: "Long live the New Dispensation!"

Keshub Sen had not the slightest intention of attacking or belittling the Christian conception of the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, he wished to intimate that the secular spirit of the age ever resents the Holy Mysteries, which the human mind, limited as it is to the cognition of phenomena, can only receive under the humble veil of appearances.

Since Sanskrit began to be taught by the side of Greek in the Universities of the West, Christendom has grown familiar with Indian beliefs. Comparative Theology is studied, more and more, in ecclesiastical seminaries. Many theologians hold that Divine Providence has designed and disclosed every religion, even the crudest and lowest, until, in the fulness of time, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. As in a French, Burmese, and Turkish brain, provided there is a similar mental temperament, the identical thoughts are at work, however much the language may differ in which they are expressed—such

is the argument used—so the same spirit of Truth wrestles in the souls of Christians, Buddhists, and Moslems, seeking expression in various formulas of faith.

The keynote of all religion is man's sacrifice to God, and God's to man. The Deity ever responds to self-sacrifice, and showers graces on prayerful souls. God's perfect sacrifice, the Incarnation, could not take place until the human race had evolved a type of man ready to tread the narrow path marked out by Christ, and to follow in His footsteps patiently, willing to bear each cross that comes, even as the Master bore His to Calvary.

If we interpret the signs of the time rightly, this restless and fermenting age yearns for a Catholicism broad enough to include all the world's religious aspirations both great and small. This yearning has found an eloquent expression in the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, the year of the World's Fair. There could be seen followers of Christ and Buddha side by side with believers in Zoroaster and Laotse. Synagogue and Mosque sent distinguished delegates. Râmaists and Tantrists were present. It was a

thoroughly representative gathering of the principal religions of the world. Each exponent discussed the verities and virtues of his respective faith in an amicable spirit, free from all bitterness and needless controversy. "Christian faith and morals", was the bold declaration of a learned sannyâsi, "have happily absorbed the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, the two loftiest peaks of pagan wisdom in the West. May God raise another Angelic Doctor to merge holy Vedânta, the sublimest system of Eastern speculation, with even farther-reaching results, into Christian Revelation."

To which we add: And may it be the privilege of the twentieth century to foster that sweet spirit of tolerance and tenderness, and thus advance the progress of God's Universal Church!

APPENDIX

Aryan Roots[1]

After parting with their Indo-Iranian kinsmen, the Aryan main stock passed through a common period of agriculture, probably in the south-west of Russia. From there the Teutonic tribes seem to have trekked through Galicia and Poland, and entered the lowlands of Germany, whilst the classical and Celtic clans journeyed together along the Danube. Subsequently the Celts, left to themselves, occu-

[1] In a work on the Greek Theatre, it would be quite unnecessary to explain the meanings of "drama" and "chorus", or "epic" and "rhapsody", because classical antiquity has bequeathed all these terms to us. But modern culture has little or no connection with the ideals of ancient India. It is hoped that the various derivations scattered throughout these pages, and often relating to words that have no direct bearing on the stage, will be found helpful by the general reader. The selected examples which are traced back to Aryan roots all occur in the present volume or in the *Short History.*

pied the Central Rhinelands. About B.C. 2000 or 1500, when bronze came to be used by the side of polished stone, the European Aryans were seated in their oldest historic settlements.

The Germans call themselves Dutch (*deutsch*), and give to both nations as well as to their English and Scandinavian cousins the common title German (*germanisch*), which, therefore, means the same as Teutonic does in England. The Teutons, together with the Celts, whom they have more or less absorbed, form the westernmost branch of the Aryan family of speech. German scholars prefer the name *Indo-German* to *Aryan*, which suggests to them Indo-Iranian only. Persian, they say, is a West-Aryan tongue, and the Hindu vernaculars are East-Aryan. Indo-European seems a happier expression than Indo-German, because Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, the languages of Iran and Erin, Teutonic and Slavonic, were distributed from India to Europe since prehistoric times. The word Aryan recommends itself by its brevity, and, by long-continued usage, is more familiar to Englishmen than Indo-European or Indo-German. We

subjoin a table of the various terms, with their German equivalents.

England.		*Germany.*
Teutonic	=	German.
German	=	Dutch.
Dutch	=	Hollandish.
East-Aryan	=	Aryan.
Aryan	=	Indo-German.

West-Aryan speech comprises Teutonic and Romance, Gaelic and Welsh, the Balkan tongues and Russian.

The Aryan race is split up into a variety of languages and dialects, but all Aryan tongues have a common stock of root-words and, consequently, of radical ideas. Daylight (Latin dies) and the bright sky (Sanskrit div or diu),[1] as well as Ju-piter (Father Sky), are cognate notions flowering on the same tree of thought. *Ved*a refers to the heavenly *vi*sion which pure-souled seers "see" (√ vid),[2] and shruti is revealed truth to which inspired hearers "listen" (√ shru). A twin verb of the former root is Latin vid-ere; of the latter, Anglo-Saxon hly-stan, our li-sten.[3] √ vish (move in,

[1] Pronounce "dew".

[2] √ indicates a root-word.

[3] As regards the change from shru to hly, see *Short History*, chapter viii, footnote to shruti.

settle) and √kri (make, do) have ramified over the whole area of Indo-European speech. Vaishya (settler, burgher), Latin vicus (settlement, borough), whence village is derived, and English place-names such as Alnwick, a Northumbrian village on the romantic Aln banks, have all sprung from vish. Creator, karma and prakriti, Prâkrit and Sanskrit itself, are rooted in the mental soil of kri.[1]

Throughout the realm of nature, light, sound, and motion are conjoint forces. Where one is manifest, the others are also present. The Âryas, gifted children of nature as they were, reflected, even in their first attempts of speech, the bright image of their mother. Word never passed the lips of Vedic rishi or Persian mage, Greek rhapsodist or Northern saga-teller, Roman or British orator, which cannot be reduced to a root expressive of the tripartite sense of light (div) or vision (vid), sound or hearing (shru), and movement (vish) or activity (kri). At first the roots were few,

[1] Creator = Maker. Karma = our past doings; habits formed; character built up. Prakriti = procreation, nature. Prâkrit = "natural" speech; not cultivated like Sanskrit, but growing wild as the flowers in the field. Sanskrit = the perfect creation and full expression of the Indian mind.

each having threefold force, but as the mind branched out, they multiplied and retained one sense only, which became a feeder of profoundest thought—the source of Aryan religion and philosophy.[1] Karma and dharma, character and the sense of duty, really the fruits of "action" and the moral "hold", are evolved from kri and dhar. The germ-idea of dharma is dhar, that is, to hold or bind. Limitation inherent in finite matter is a more scientific phrase, but conveys no more than dharma. The vocable displays a wealth of ethical meaning. "Form" and "custom" have a firm hold on society; all "law" is binding; "re-lig-ion", too, enjoins many an ob-ligation; "environment" and "idiosyncrasy" hold the individual with an iron grip—all this and more is involved in dharma. There is an Indian saying that this life's karma shapes dharma in the next; that is to say, the use which a man makes of his present opportunities determines his future circumstance.

*Brah*ma and pra*kri*ti—God and nature

[1] "Go", the Sanskrit for cow, has actually retained the three meanings: (1) shining "stars", (2) lowing "kine", (3) the hurled "thunderbolt", the winged "arrow".

—have sprung from the same cluster of roots (brih and kri). It is noteworthy that the supreme god of the brahmins was originally not conceived as motionless and passive, but as *cre*ative (kri), i.e. active. The definition of Brahma as expansion (brih) of the prayerful heart is a priestly afterthought, far too subtle and scholastic to have a place in primitive culture. The simpler notion of a nature spirit, or, as we should say, of cosmic energy "breaking forth" (brih), as star and flower, wood and stream, and as the cloud-hid "mountains" (ge*birg*e in German), is more in harmony with the naïve sentiments of a vigorous and youthful race. Only the trained linguist or the poet's finer fancy can discern in the clipped coinage of our polished tongues the flash and rush and roar of the wild elements, and the native charm of meadow-land and forest, distilled in triple essence.

List of Dates[1]

B.C.

2000–1500	The Indo-Europeans in their oldest historic settlements.
6th - -	Rise of Buddhism.
4th - -	Pânini.
327 - -	Alexander invades India.
*303 - -	Chandragupta defeats Seleucus.
3rd - -	Ashoka — Buddhism introduced in Ceylon.
2nd - -	Pushpamitra and Agnimitra.
1st - -	Pâli Canon committed to writing.

A.D.

5th & 6th	Decline of Magadha and of Indian Buddhism — Rise of the Gupta dynasty and of Hinduism—Kâlidâsa.
6th & 7th	Many Hindu Temples built in Orissa — Sanskrit still in official use — "The Toy Cart".
7th - -	Harsha — Bâna — Dandin — I-Tsing visits India.
*700 - -	Bhavabhûti.

[1] Dates marked * are approximate, and "—th" indicates the century.

9th - -	Adwaita systematized—Bhatta Nârâyan—Shivaswâmi.
10th - -	Râjashekhar.
*1000 - -	Mahmud of Ghazni invades India.
11th - -	Rajputs, rulers of India—The Brihat Katha twice recast in Sanskrit—Dâmodar.
12th - -	"Gîta Govinda"—"Prabodha Chandroday"—perhaps "Mudra-Râkshasa".
13th - -	Chenghiz Khan—Moslems, rulers of India.
*1400 - -	Timur captures Delhi.
15th - -	"Rogues in Council."
16th - -	Babar and Akbar—Chaitanya and Nanak.
17th - -	Death of Tulsi Das—Râmabhadra.
18th - -	Râja Guru Govinda.
*1800 - -	Ranjit Singh.
19th - -	Keshub Sen and Trailokya—Comparative Philology centres in Sanskrit and Phonetics.
1893 - -	"Parliament of Religions" at Chicago.
20th - -	Philological Research devoted, more and more, to Semantics and Indo-European Civilization.[1]

[1] As far back as the 18th century scholars felt the need of a semantic vocabulary, dealing with European terms of culture. "There is room for a very interesting work which should lay open the connection between the languages and manners of nations" (Gibbon, *Decline*, Chapter I).

Words Explained

1. ENGLISH

2. GERMAN

3. GREEK AND LATIN

4. INDIAN

5. NAMES AND PLACES

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